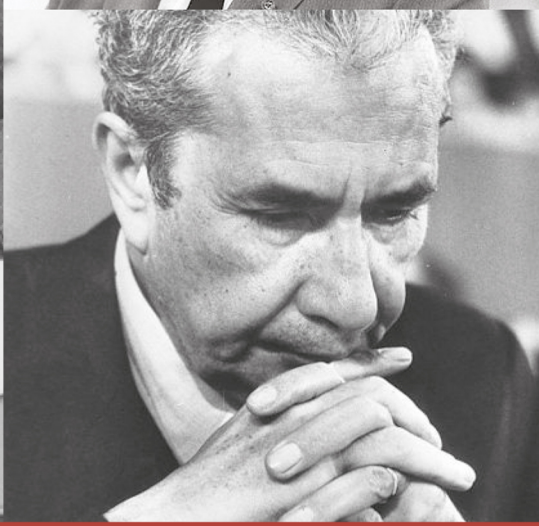

SPIES AND THEIR MASTERS

INTELLIGENCE–POLICY RELATIONS IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES

MATTEO FAINI

ROUTLEDGE

SPIES AND THEIR MASTERS

This book delves into the secret histories of the CIA, the FBI, and British and Italian intelligence to study how policymakers can control intelligence agencies and when these agencies will try to remove their own government.

For every government they serve, intelligence agencies are both a threat and a necessity. They often provide vital information for national security, but the secrets they possess can also be used against their own masters. This book introduces subversion paradox theory to provide a social scientific explanation of the unequal power dynamic resulting from an often fraught relationship between agencies and their 'masters'. The author also makes a case for the existence of 'deep state' conspiracies, including in highly developed democracies, and cautions those who denounce their existence that trying to control intelligence by politicizing it is likely to backfire.

An important intervention in the field of intelligence studies, this book will be indispensable for intelligence professionals and policymakers in understanding and bridging the cultural divide between these two groups. It will also make for a fascinating and informative read to scholars and researchers of diplomacy, foreign policy, international relations, strategic and defence studies, security studies, political studies, policymaking and comparative politics.

Matteo Faini works for the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. He has a PhD in Politics from Princeton University, New Jersey, USA, and was previously a Max Weber Postdoctoral Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

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SPIES AND THEIR MASTERS

Intelligence–Policy Relations in Democratic Countries

Matteo Faini

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1

INTRODUCTION

Democracies, intelligence agencies and the neglected problem of subversion

Early in his presidency, Richard Nixon had numerous long talks with J. Edgar Hoover. Based on his then forty-five years of experience as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Hoover told Nixon that the FBI had been conducting, without a search warrant, black-bag jobs, break-ins and bugging for every president since Franklin Roosevelt.[1] It was now Nixon's turn to use the FBI as its secret political arm.

Nixon did not need to be reminded of what the FBI could do. As a young congressman on the House Committee on Un-American Activities and then as vice president in the Eisenhower administration, he had benefited from the secret cooperation of the FBI in the anti-communist fight. Nixon's political successes as an anti-communist crusader would have been impossible without Hoover's help.

Yet, Nixon understood that Hoover's offer to help him came at a price. Hoover was not always the faithful executor of White House directives. Nixon had been at the receiving end of many of the FBI leaks intended to assist the political opponents of the Truman administration. "Attorneys General seldom directed Mr. Hoover. It was difficult even for Presidents",[2] he would testify years later. Despite thinking that Hoover "oughta resign", in 1971 Nixon concluded that he could not force him to do so. He wanted "to avoid the situation where [Hoover] can leave with a blast (…). We may have on our hands here a man who will pull down the temple with him, including me."[3]

Nixon's experience with Hoover's FBI reflects a common pattern. Policymakers who politicize their intelligence agencies reap some benefits in the short run, but they or their successors later find themselves dealing with an institution they no longer control, that is willing to turn against its creators and masters. Nixon's early political career benefited enormously from Hoover's help, and Hoover's death in 1972 allowed Nixon to nominate a new director of the FBI. It wasn't Hoover who pulled down the temple on Nixon, but his deputy, Mark Felt, who revealed the White House's involvement in Watergate to *The Washington Post*. In other cases it was more clearly the entire institution that turned on its masters. The Italian

statesman Aldo Moro, for instance, used SIFAR, Italy's military intelligence, to get rid of a government he disliked in 1960, but four years later it was his government's turn to be the target of SIFAR's subversive plots.

This Frankenstein-type story is at the heart of this book, but its reach is broader. It develops and tests a theory of intelligence–policy relations in democratic countries and answers three main questions. First, when will intelligence agencies be politically neutral? Second, when, and how, will policymakers strongly control them? In other words, when will they have the capacity to get an agency to obey their orders and instructions and to prevent it from engaging in unauthorized activities? Third, when will intelligence agencies engage in subversion, i.e. attempts, plots or threats to remove their own government?

I argue that the answer to all three questions depends on one factor: is one of the intelligence agency's main enemies a domestic political movement that poses a perceived plausible threat of overthrowing the government and radically changing the political or economic order? If such a strong subversive movement is among the agency's main enemies, the agency itself will not be politically neutral. Such a political intelligence agency is harder for policymakers to control than a non-political one, which instead does not have a strong subversive movement as one of its main enemies. Only political intelligence agencies engage in subversion, and are motivated to do so when they perceive that their government is unwilling or incapable of adequately fighting the subversive threat. An upcoming close election or divisions among their principals give them the opportunity to install a stronger government. Paradoxically, intelligence agencies designed to fight against a subversive movement are likely to engage in subversion themselves.[4] I thus call this theory subversion paradox theory.

I test this theory on four case studies: British intelligence from 1909 to 1924, the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1908 to 1948, the establishment and early years of the Central Intelligence Agency and Italian military intelligence from 1943 to 1964.

The British intelligence community was established to fight against German espionage, but it shifted towards the ideal type of the political intelligence agency after 1917, when fighting leftist subversives at home and abroad became its priority. Soon enough British intelligence agencies attempted to remove governments they perceived as perilously soft on communism. In 1920 military and intelligence officials tried to force Prime Minister Lloyd George to resign, and in 1924 MI5 and MI6 officers leaked a forged letter to the conservative press just days before the elections, intending to cause the defeat of the incumbent Labour Party.

The Bureau of Investigation was initially a law enforcement agency with no intelligence powers. It became a political intelligence agency once it began to fight domestic subversives. After several scandals in the early 1920s, one of its principals attempted to change the Bureau's priorities away from subversion and back towards law enforcement. This attempt was only partially successful and was reversed in 1936, when President Roosevelt asked the FBI to fight subversion once again. Harry Truman paid the price of his predecessor's decision when in 1948 the FBI attempted to remove him by assisting his political foes in Congress and in the polls.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has never had a strong domestic subversive movement as one of its main enemies. Accordingly, it closely resembled the ideal type of a non-political intelligence agency for most of its history, and has never engaged in subversion.

Throughout the Cold War, Italian military intelligence was largely dedicated to the fight against domestic leftist subversives. It closely resembled the ideal type of the political intelligence agency, it was poorly controlled by its principals and it repeatedly engaged in subversion. In 1960 it helped subvert a center-right government that was unintentionally contributing to the strengthening of the Italian Communist Party. In 1964 it threatened to remove a center-left government it perceived as dragging the country into a Communist-like economic abyss with its radical reform programs.

It may seem odd to focus on subversion in a theory of intelligence–policy relations in democratic countries. Among the many unauthorized activities that intelligence agencies can engage in, subversion is at the far end in terms of gravity and is more commonly associated with coup-prone authoritarian countries than democratic ones. Intelligence agencies can, for instance, leak information to deliberately undermine a policy, spy on their own superiors and blackmail them. Thus, an agency that does not subvert its own government is not necessarily strongly controlled by the government.

Yet, as we will see, intelligence agencies that engage in one kind of unauthorized activity also tend to engage in others. Trying to explain every single type of unauthorized activity would have made for a cumbersome theory. Instead, I explain when and why policymakers are more or less likely to strongly control intelligence agencies, thus preventing them from engaging in all forms of unauthorized activities.

By focusing on democracies I show that, contrary to prevailing wisdom, the problem of subversion is not confined to autocratic countries. It is true that the vast majority of coups occur in poor and autocratic countries.[5] Further, economically developed democracies have almost never turned into autocracies, even though the increasingly authoritarian governments of, among others, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey and Viktor Orban in Hungary have cast a doubt on this golden rule of democratic stability.[6] Thus, most scholars would hardly associate undemocratic attempts to remove the sitting government with rich and long-established democracies such as Britain in the 1920s and America in the late 1940s. In the words of Moran, Iordanou and Stout, "unheard of among spy chiefs in the West, African spy chiefs have even launched coups".[7] I show that coups-like phenomena are not unheard of even in rich, Western democracies, where intelligence agencies have tried, at times successfully, to remove their governments using means that fall outside regular democratic procedures. These means are generally more subtle than tanks surrounding the presidential palace and military announcements on the radio. A leaked letter, a whispered threat or a secret revealed at the right time to the right person are sometimes all it takes for an intelligence agency to remove a government and to replace it with another one apparently just as democratic.

The literature on coups does not capture these episodes because it only focuses on overt attempts to overthrow the government, dismissing as rumors too unreliable to study the episodes of subversion I study here.[8] Because they focus only on overt attempts, scholars conclude that Western democracies have largely been immune from coups. This is true, but misleading. If we include covert attempts within the definition of coups we find numerous cases in Western democratic countries.

I call these cases subversion, rather than coups, in order to avoid giving a different meaning to a term that is widely used in the literature. Subversion has so far largely escaped scholars' attention, for several reasons. First, it is a difficult subject to study. It occurs in secrecy and the actors involved will do their utmost to make sure that it remains secret. When it comes to light it generally does so incompletely, years after the facts and shrouded in a fog of mysteries and often implausible conspiracy theories. In many cases it probably does not come to light at all. Second, subversion generally does not lead to a change in the nature of the regime that would be captured by a large dataset. Lastly, the vast majority of works on intelligence–policy relations have focused on American and British intelligence, whose most frequent problem has not been subversion, but politicization, defined as the manipulation of intelligence so that it reflects policy preferences. As the next section shows, subversion paradox theory subsumes under a broader framework existing theories about politicization, explaining why and when the preconditions that lead to politicization but not to subversion emerge.

What do intelligence scholars say?

In 2013 a large survey of intelligence scholars identified the three main problems affecting the intelligence literature: the lack of comparative studies, the parochial focus on the American and British experience and the lack of a typology of intelligence agencies.[9] The literature has improved since, and we now have several comparative studies that go beyond the Anglo-Saxon world.[10] This book strengthens this trend by developing a typological theory of intelligence agencies and testing it by comparing Italian, British and American cases.

The literature on intelligence–policy relations has paid scant attention to control and virtually none to subversion, focusing instead almost exclusively on politicization. Unsurprisingly, politicization has been the main problem for the Central Intelligence Agency, which occupies the lion's share of the intelligence literature, whereas weak control and, even more, subversion have not been significant problems throughout the CIA's history.

The ideal relationship and politicization

Using the CIA as its often implicit model, the literature generally begins by describing the ideal relationship between intelligence and policy in democratic countries. There is a consensus on what this ideal relationship looks like.[11] Intelligence agencies are meant to serve policymakers, providing them with relevant,

timely and objective information related to national security. Intelligence agencies don't take sides in the domestic political struggle, they don't formulate policy, nor, unless they are asked to do so, do they recommend policy. They can directly implement a policy, generally a covert one, but always under policymakers' instructions.[12]

This ideal relationship is seldom found in practice. Scholars agree that the fundamental reason which makes the ideal relationship hard to attain is the tradeoff between relevance and objectivity.[13] In order to be relevant intelligence must meet policymakers' needs, capture their attention and inform their decisions, but this biases intelligence in a number of ways. To better understand policymakers' needs, intelligence officials will have to work in close proximity with them, but this may tempt them to sugar-coat their analyses and tell their bosses what they want to hear.[14] Intelligence officials may try to resist this temptation, but their careers and budgets usually depend on policymakers' decisions, making them vulnerable to manipulation. Policymakers may ask intelligence officials to focus excessively on issues that support their policies, while ignoring others that would undermine them or that are not on their agendas. They will prefer short products that make unequivocal, and often overly confident, predictions rather than longer analytic pieces that convey the analyst's degree of uncertainty.

The tradeoff between relevance and objectivity has led to a long-standing debate on the optimal distance between intelligence and policy. Intelligence needs to be close enough to policymakers to be relevant, but not so close that it stops being objective. Those who emphasize the need to be relevant fall under the name of the Gates school, from former director of Central Intelligence Robert Gates. Those who emphasize the need to remain objective are generally referred to as members of the Kent school, from the founding father of the CIA's analytical branch Sherman Kent.[15]

The differences between the two schools are more a matter of emphasis than substance. Kent agreed that intelligence detached from policy was useless and argued that "of the two dangers – that of intelligence being too far from the users and that of being too close – the greatest danger is the one of being too far."[16] Similarly, Gates argued that "in no instance should we alter our judgment to make a product more palatable to policymakers" and that "the absolute integrity of our analysis is the most important of the core values of the Central Intelligence Agency."[17]

Both sides agree that intelligence risks compromising part of its objectivity as it strives to be relevant in the world of politics and policymaking. This is what some scholars broadly define as politicization: bringing intelligence within the realm of politics[18], or compromising "the objectivity of intelligence, or of how it is used, to serve political aims".[19] Because the tradeoff between relevance and objectivity is inescapable, the logical conclusion is that some degree of politicization is inevitable. In Richard Betts' words, "if intelligence is to be useful, its politicization will be a continuum from more to less, with the least being unattainable without denuding an analysis of all connection with political reality."[20]

Other scholars have used a narrower definition of politicization and tried to identify the conditions under which it is more or less likely to occur. Harry Howe Ransom, for instance, argued that politicization is more likely when there is no consensus over foreign policy and when the national security debate spills out into the open.[21] In the most important work on the subject, Joshua Rovner defined politicization as "the attempt to manipulate intelligence so that it reflects policy preferences" and argued that it occurs under two necessary conditions.[22] First, policymakers have publicly committed to a given policy. Second, they are facing a critical constituency, i.e. a domestic group whose support is necessary for the success of that policy but which is initially skeptical of the policy itself. At this point policymakers turn to intelligence for help. Intelligence is secret and, in the US at least, it has "cultivated professional norms of objectivity and a public image of separation from domestic politics".[23] These traits – secrecy, objectivity and an apolitical image – make intelligence's judgment valuable for policymakers engaged in a public dispute. Policymakers will thus pressure the intelligence community to support the policy, even manipulating the evidence if necessary.[24] Given what Rovner calls "policymakers' disproportionate influence over intelligence–policy relations",[25] attempts at politicization usually succeed.[26]

Rovner's causal mechanism operates under highly restrictive conditions, making it applicable only to a relatively small subset of cases of intelligence–policy relations.[27] In all of Rovner's cases, five of them American and one of them British, two conditions were present. First, the intelligence agencies had cultivated professional norms of objectivity and political neutrality. As Rovner recognized, his causal mechanism is valid as long as there is the "perception that intelligence is politically unbiased".[28] Second, policymakers strongly controlled their intelligence services, justifying Rovner's belief in "policymakers' disproportionate influence over intelligence–policy relations". If intelligence agencies are not perceived as politically neutral or if policymakers do not strongly control them, Rovner's theoretical framework does not apply. This is the case for many intelligence agencies outside the US and Britain and, as we will see, at times even within these two countries.

Based on the current literature, politicization thus appears to be mainly an American phenomenon. I will challenge this proposition, but it is still important to see how the literature explains American intelligence's vulnerability to politicization. Uri Bar-Joseph argued that what distinguishes the American case is the combination of three variables. First, there is an executive leader in charge of national security who is strong enough to manipulate intelligence.[29] Second, intelligence is generally trusted by public opinion and its estimates play an important role in resolving public debates, making politicization a valuable strategy for political leaders. Lastly, the competition between intelligence agencies to gain the president's ear makes them "less reluctant to provide 'intelligence to please'".[30]

Control and subversion

The current literature has thus identified the causal mechanisms behind politicization and explained why it appears to be mainly an American phenomenon. If so, what do

intelligence–policy relations in other democratic countries look like? What pathologies will they suffer from? Is weak policymakers' control a significant problem?

The social scientific literature has little to say about these questions. Despite the resonance enjoyed by Senator Frank Church's misplaced accusation that the CIA was a "rogue elephant rampaging out of control", scholars have paid little attention to policymakers' control of intelligence. In a rare edited volume on controlling intelligence, Glenn Hastedt noted in passing that intelligence agencies that focus on internal threats tend to be more controversial than those with an external focus. Further, the agencies that view the threat as an absolute priority, rather than one to be balanced against other broader societal goals, are generally harder to control. Hastedt bemoaned that too much attention had been given to "formal-legalistic" control mechanisms, whereas meaningful control required attention to the values and norms of intelligence officers.[31] Unfortunately, Hastedt's volume did not develop a theory of policymakers' ability to control intelligence, did not test the insights it contained and, except for one chapter on Canada, focused exclusively on the CIA.

More recent volumes have studied numerous other countries, but they have similarly failed to reach generalizable conclusions and they have focused on oversight rather than on control. By oversight I mean the activity of those who check that the agency is performing effectively and/or that it is not engaging in improper and illegal activities, whether in pursuit of principals' orders or without their consent. By control, as previously discussed, I mean principals' capacity to get an agency to obey their orders and instructions and to prevent it from engaging in unauthorized activities. Controllers give orders, overseers do not.[32] These volumes list the challenges of oversight and control and survey different solutions, describe intelligence agencies of which often little is known, but do not provide a social scientific explanation as to when control will be weak or strong.[33] Some, like Hastedt, hint at the link between internal threats and weak principals' control, but these observations remain theoretically undeveloped, little more than plausible guesses based on anecdotal evidence.[34]

Pathologies other than politicization have similarly received scant attention by intelligence scholars. Bar-Joseph conducted the only study of a phenomenon which comes close to what I intend as subversion. He studied intelligence interventions in the politics of democratic states, defined as "any deliberate action taken by intelligence that derives from at least some parochial political motivations." These actions can have two different goals: either in support of government policy, called intelligence to please, or in opposition to the policy of the elected government, called "alteration of policy".[35]

Alteration of policy includes instances of what I would refer to as subversion, but is much broader. Everything from removing a government to pushing it to adopt an undesired policy is included, as long as the intelligence agency acts in opposition to the government and has "at least some parochial motivations". Bar-Joseph argued that alteration of policy is more likely when intelligence and policy are not kept sufficiently separate one from the other and when policymakers exercise only a weak form of control over intelligence. What guarantees a sufficient degree of

separation between intelligence and policy is the degree of professionalism within the intelligence agencies.[36] Professionalism renders the intelligence agency politically sterile and neutral by making it ready to obey any civilian group with legitimate authority.

The biggest problem with using professionalism to explain intelligence interventions in politics is that cause and effect are too proximate and nearly indistinguishable. A professional intelligence agency is one that is politically neutral and that does not intervene in politics. Once we have identified a professional intelligence agency we have also implied that it does not intervene in politics. A more fruitful approach would be to ask instead when intelligence agencies are more or less likely to be professional. In other words, when will an intelligence agency be politically neutral and when will it not be?

Why does this project matter for policy?

The most recent of my cases is more than half a century old, and the intelligence profession has changed enormously in the meantime. Further, with the demise of international communism at the end of the Cold War, Western societies do not seem to face a plausible subversive threat. My theory and my historical material may therefore sound passé: subversive movements are a problem of the past and with them subversion by intelligence agencies. Nonetheless, the problem I study is of more than historical significance.

First, even though the means of gathering and analyzing intelligence have changed enormously, the relationship between intelligence agencies and policymakers has not and the literature regularly uses decades-old cases to provide recommendations that apply to the present. Imagine parachuting a high-ranking intelligence official from the 1950s or 1960s into the present. He (it was almost always a he) would not recognize many of the means used to gather information and he would be unfamiliar with some of the techniques used to analyze them. Yet he would immediately recognize the same fundamental problems in the relationship with policymakers. His colleagues are still seeking to inform policymakers on matters of national security, crowding the waiting rooms of their offices with classified briefing books in their hands. They are still fighting for policymakers' time and attention, trying to convince them that the information and analysis they have is better than what policymakers can find anywhere else. Policymakers still struggle to control their intelligence agencies, thinking, in some cases correctly, that an agency has a political agenda that differs from their own.

Second, numerous non-Western societies face significant subversive threats. Whether it's the threat of radical Islamist movements in the Middle East or rival ethnic factions in Sub-Saharan Africa, or a combination of the two, numerous governments throughout the world feel that their hold on power is threatened by a strong subversive movement. Few of these governments are democratic, but those that have experienced democratic rule have frequently reversed to authoritarianism after a subversive attempt with the participation of their intelligence agencies. For

instance, Egyptian intelligence contributed to the removal of the country's first democratically elected president in 2013. Pakistani intelligence has become notorious for its repeated attempts to remove governments it dislikes. Policymakers in newly established democracies will find here an explanation of when they are more likely to control their intelligence agencies and a number of suggestions on how best to do so.

Third, understanding how to control intelligence agencies and how to prevent them from subverting their own government are prominent issues on policymakers' agendas even in well-consolidated democracies. In the US, both sides of the political spectrum have, for different reasons, accused the three most important intelligence agencies of being out of control. Democrats in Congress accused the CIA of having misled policymakers concerning the value and the severity of its interrogation and detention program.[37] Liberal commentators were amongst the strongest critics of the National Security Agency (NSA) and of what they called its "out-of-control spying on private communications".[38] Most famously, some left-wing pundits have (wrongly, as I argue in the next chapter) accused the FBI of rigging the 2016 election in favor of Donald Trump. In turn, Trump himself has (again, wrongly) accused the FBI of trying to subvert him and he has repeatedly attacked the intelligence community, claiming it is leaking false or compromising material to damage him politically, and even compared this behavior to Nazi Germany.[39]

Poor control and suspected subversion are not just American problems. For instance, South Korean intelligence spread propaganda in favor of a presidential candidate in the 2012 elections.[40] The former prime minister of tiny and wealthy Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, had to resign due to the unauthorized activities of his intelligence agency and later complained that secret services "are very hard to keep under control".[41]

Fourth, in response to this (real or perceived) problem of lack of control, some policymakers are trying to politicize their own intelligence agencies, thinking that this will allow them to better control otherwise hostile members of the "deep state". In July 2019, Trump announced that he wanted to nominate John Ratcliffe, a Republican member of Congress who had strongly criticized the Mueller investigation, as the next director of National Intelligence. Trump was initially forced to backtrack as senators questioned Ratcliffe's qualifications as well as his willingness to uphold the intelligence community's political neutrality, but seven months later he again announced that he was nominating Ratcliffe as director of National Intelligence.[42] This book suggests that such a nomination would be short-sighted and counterproductive even in terms of Trump's control over intelligence. The alignment of political preferences does not last long and is a less effective tool of control than the preservation of the neutrality of the intelligence community. In other words, Trump, like other policymakers in democratic countries, should be content with an intelligence community that is willing to speak truth to power and provide assessments which do not always align with the administration's policies.[43] The alternative, a politicized intelligence community which tells policymakers what they want to hear, will not only degrade the quality of the policymaking process but also develop a political agenda of its own, which soon enough will come into conflict with the administration's own agenda.

Lastly, even though communism no longer poses a plausible threat, radical populist movements on the right and the left may be construed by the sitting governments as subversive. For instance, the German domestic intelligence agency announced in January 2019 that it would start monitoring the youth wing and some prominent figures of Alternative for Germany.[44] Other governments may follow suit in what would be not just a highly controversial policy, but one that risks reducing the control they exercise over their intelligence agencies.

This book does not address any of these cases specifically. As often happens with intelligence studies, I had to go back several decades in order to have access to the necessary documents. My case studies deal with historically important events, from the opening of diplomatic relations between Britain and the Soviet Union to the FBI's role in the second Red Scare, but these may seem irrelevant to policymakers' current concerns. Policymakers are unlikely to be interested in the intricacies of the Italian political system during the Cold War, yet by studying this and other cases I can provide a generalizable explanation as to when policymakers' control over intelligence agencies will be strong or weak and when these agencies will subvert. Policymakers who want to prevent their intelligence agencies from engaging in unauthorized activities should find this useful. The conclusion draws from this explanation a series of policy recommendations on how to do so.

Notes

1 Nixon's testimony in front of the Church Committee, cited in Weiner (2012), p. 278.
2 Cited in Weiner (2012), p. 280, from Nixon's testimony in "U.S. v. Felt", 29 October 1980. See also Kessler (2002), p. 171, who cites Nixon as saying, "I knew that if Hoover had decided not to cooperate, it would matter little what I had decided or approved."
3 From a conversation between Nixon and Attorney General John Mitchell, October 1971, cited in Summers (1993), p. 9.
4 A subversive movement is one that seeks to overthrow the government and to radically change the economic and/or constitutional order. A political movement that merely seeks to remove the government is not defined as subversive, since this is normal behavior for political movements in the opposition. This may generate some confusion, as the word subversion and its derivatives are used with slightly different meanings. An intelligence agency engages in subversion if it attempts, plots or threatens to remove the government, even though it may not seek to change the economic and/or constitutional order as well.
5 Powell (2010).
6 Przeworski and Limongi (1997).
7 Moran, Iordanou, Stout and Maddrell (2018), p. 8.
8 The largest dataset on coups, for instance, defines coups as "illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive". See Powell and Thyne (2011), p. 252.
9 Johnson and Shelton (2013).
10 See especially Moran, Stout, Iordanou and Maddrell (2018), Davies and Gustafson (2013) and, for the rare volume written before the survey, Bruneau and Boraz (2007).
11 Lowenthal (2010), pp. 437–438; Jervis (2010), ch. 4; Betts (2007), ch. 4, especially pp. 66–67; Davis (2006); and Rovner (2011), especially p. 4.
12 I think this ideal is normatively appealing, but misleading as a baseline to understand intelligence–policy relations beyond the CIA. Some view this model as inadequate even when explaining the CIA: see Marrin (2013b), pp. 39–47.

13 See, for instance, Betts (2007), p. 78 and Rovner (2011), p. 20.
14 This is what is referred to as the proximity hypothesis. See, for instance, Marrin (2013a), p. 2.
15 This debate is recounted in, among others, Betts (2007), pp. 76–77, Rovner (2011), pp. 19–20 and Bar-Joseph (2013), p. 349.
16 Kent (1951), p. 195.
17 Gates (1992), p. 7 and p. 13. See also Betts (2007), p. 75.
18 Betts (2007), p. 74.
19 Pillar (2010), p. 473.
20 Betts (2007), p. 98. See also Pillar (2010), p. 483, Hastedt (2013), pp. 5–6 and Marrin (2013), p, 40.
21 Ransom (2008), p. 193. See also Wirtz (1991).
22 Rovner (2011), p. 5.
23 Ibidem, p. 47.
24 Ibidem, pp. 43–44.
25 Ibidem, p. 30.
26 Ibidem, p. 19.
27 For a similar critique, see the H-Diplo Roundtable, vol. 3, no. 17, 2012, especially the review by Bar-Joseph. All web links have been last accessed on 4 March 2020, unless otherwise noted. http://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-3-17.pdf
28 Rovner (2011), p. 47.
29 A leader that is strong enough to politicize intelligence can also exist in a parliamentary system, but this happens less frequently than in a presidential system, according to Bar-Joseph. He discusses Tony Blair in Britain and Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel as two cases of strong leaders in a parliamentary democracy who tried to politicize intelligence.
30 Bar-Joseph (2013), p. 353 and p. 361.
31 Hastedt (1991), pp. 9–10, 18 and ch. 5.
32 Control belongs to the principals, generally in the executive branch, whereas oversight is in the hands of numerous actors such as parliamentary committees, the courts, the media, watchdog groups and at times even figures within the executive such as inspectors general. The distinction is often overlooked in the literature, but those who draw it, such as Gill (1994), p. 217, use similar definitions.
33 Gill (1994), Born and Caparini (2007), Bruneau and Boraz (2007), Baldino (2010).
34 See for instance Bruneau and Boraz (2007), pp. 11–12 and Jervis (2007), pp. x–xi.
35 Bar-Joseph (1995), pp. 72–73.
36 Bar-Joseph (1995), p. 2.
37 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence "Committee's Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program", released on 3 December 2014. www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/7/c/7c85429a-ec38-4bb5-968f-289799bf6d0e/D87288C34A6D9FF736F9459ABCF83210.sscistudy1.pdf
38 "British Press Freedom Under Threat", *The New York Times,* Editorial Board, 15 November 2013.
39 See, among others, Mark Landler "Trump Under Fire for Invoking Nazis in Criticism of U.S. Intelligence", *The New York Times*, 11 January 2017, and Mark Landler and Richard Perez-Pena "Flynn Was Brought Down by Illegal Leaks to News Media, Trump Says", *The New York Times*, 15 February 2017.
40 Choe Sang-Hun "Investigators Raid Agency of Military in South Korea", *The New York Times*, 23 October 2013.
41 Jack Moore "EU Chief Seeks European Secret Service", *Newsweek*, 1 May 2015 and Roman Leick "The Juncker Scandal: Luxembourg's Dirty Secrets" *Der Spiegel*, 15 July 2013.
42 Michael Crowley, Julian Barnes, Nicholas Fandos and Maggie Haberman "Trump Taps John Ratcliffe for Director of National Intelligence", *The New York Times,* 28 February 2020, and Charlie Savage, Julian Barnes and Annie Karni "Trump Drops Plans to Nominate John Ratcliffe as Director of National Intelligence", *The New York Times*, 2 August 2019.

43 So far, US intelligence chiefs seem to have preserved their agencies' political neutrality, despite serving the most hostile Administration since Richard Nixon's. They have publicly presented assessments which clash with the Trump Administration's policies, resisting the public pressure to adapt to the administration's view. See, for instance, Julian Barnes "Dan Coats, the Intelligence Chief, Finds His Voice: Will It Anger Trump?", *The New York Times*, 17 July 2018 and David Sanger and Julian Barnes "On North Korea and Iran, Intelligence Chiefs Contradict Trump", *The New York Times*, 29 January 2019.

44 Katrin Bennhold "German Intelligence Agency Puts Far-Right Party on Warning", *The New York Times*, 15 January 2019.

2

THE PARADOX OF SUBVERSION

A theory of intelligence–policy relations in democratic countries

For every government they serve, intelligence agencies are both a threat and a necessity. They provide often vital information for national security, but the secrets they possess can also be used against their own masters. The problem is particularly acute for democracies, whose open form of government is at odds with the secrecy in which intelligence operates. Yet, looking at the social science literature on intelligence, one is left with the impression that the biggest problem in intelligence–policy relations are wily policymakers violating their agencies' political neutrality. Policymakers sometimes misuse their towering influence to bend intelligence agencies to their will, manipulating intelligence for political gains. Intelligence agencies are generally depicted as populated by obedient bureaucrats overwhelmed by their powerful political masters. These bureaucrats strive to find the difficult balance between political relevance and political neutrality, operating *in* the world of politics without being *of* the world of politics. Of course, authors in this literature readily acknowledge that intelligence agencies can sometimes misbehave of their own initiative,[1] but they have little to say as to why and when this will happen, focusing instead on what they think is the more relevant problem of politicization.

This portrait of intelligence agencies is remarkably at odds with most popular accounts. Here, the prevailing depiction is of intelligence agencies as the real masters of politics, pulling the strings behind the back of powerless policymakers and sometimes getting rid of them altogether. This is a crude caricature, and popular accounts are replete with outlandish but die-hard claims such as the supposed role of the CIA in John F. Kennedy's assassination. Still, in many countries, including established democracies, describing intelligence agencies as out of control and with their own political agenda is far from outlandish. Much of the historical literature on, for instance, French and Italian intelligence during the Cold War agrees that these agencies repeatedly plotted coups, and many argue, albeit with less solid evidence, that they even staged terrorist attacks.[2] Of course, the significance of politicization pales in comparison to coup-plotting, yet we have good explanations of the former, but almost none of the latter.

This chapter wants to fill this gap. I develop a theory of the relationship between intelligence agencies and their principals in democratic countries that answers three main questions. First, when will intelligence agencies be politically neutral and when will they not be? Second, when will policymakers control their intelligence agencies? Third, when will intelligence agencies attempt or threaten to remove their own government?

I first describe the actors in this theory and their goals. I then develop subversion paradox theory in three separate causal steps, each one of which corresponds to one of the three main questions above. First, I link an agency's main enemies with its type, political or non-political. An agency's type is then linked with the degree of control exercised by its principals. Lastly, I explain when and why an agency will engage in politicization or subversion.

The actors and their goals

Intelligence agencies are those organizations that, within a state, are tasked with the collection and analysis of information related to national security[3]. Principals are those actors who create, reform and/or are in charge of an intelligence agency. They include the government, the political parties that form the government, heads of state with substantial powers to nominate the government[4] and, in some cases, foreign governments that have built a hierarchical relationship with an intelligence agency of a foreign country.[5]

I assume that the intelligence agencies and their principals both want to fight effectively against the main enemies, or priorities, which they have identified.[6] Principals also want to control their agencies, preventing them from engaging in unauthorized activities and ensuring that they obey their orders and instructions.[7] Both goals are simplifying assumptions, for three reasons. First, principals and intelligence agencies have many more goals than these. Second, principals may simply not care about intelligence, or they may prefer not to be informed about what their intelligence agencies are doing. Third, principals and intelligence agencies include many people who often disagree with each other. As I will show, disagreements among principals play an important role in the last step of subversion paradox theory, but the theory assumes that intelligence agencies are unitary actors. This is a less realistic assumption than the previous ones, and it raises a question: how can I distinguish when the entire agency is doing something, versus when only some factions within it are? As we will see, most of the case studies are unproblematic in this regard. In those few cases where it was not evident if an act was committed by the entire agency or only by some factions within it, I used the following criteria. I attributed an act to the entire agency if it involved either the head of the agency or numerous high-ranking officials. In the latter case, there must be no evidence of fundamental disagreements at the top of the agency and it must not contrast with what the agency had been doing before. For instance, there have been numerous leaks from the US intelligence community throughout the Trump administration, most of which have been politically damaging to the administration. I would not attribute these leaks to the agencies as a whole, since there is no evidence that their directors or numerous high-ranking officials were involved.

Step 1: main enemies and political and non-political agencies

When the principals create or reform an intelligence agency, they have to decide what its priorities will be. In other words, who are the main enemies against which the intelligence agency will fight? Not everyone among the principals need to be part of this decision or agree with it. In many cases the principals will not make an explicit decision and the list of intelligence priorities will remain more or less the same of what it used to be. Regardless of how this decision came about, the important point for my theory is the answer to the following question: is one of the intelligence agency's main enemies a domestic subversive group that poses a perceived plausible threat of overthrowing the government[8]?

I speak of a threat as plausible if the principals, at the moment of the agency's creation, or, after that, the agency itself, believe that there is a non-negligible chance that the subversive threat will succeed in overthrowing the government. Looking at the public and private statements of the principals and later of the agency, do we see them expressing concern about the possible overthrow of the government?

The causal factor in subversion paradox theory, its only independent variable, is the presence or absence of a perceived plausible subversive threat among an agency's main enemies.[9] If an intelligence agency has a strong subversive group as one of its main enemies, the agency will be a political intelligence agency. If the agency does not have a strong subversive group as one of its main enemies, it will likely be a non-political intelligence agency. Political and non-political intelligence agencies are two opposite ideal types. They are never found in practice in their pure form, but they help me explain an otherwise confusing world.

These two ideal types along have two defining characteristics, which correspond to the key decisions that principals have to make when designing an intelligence agency. These decisions are, in order of importance, whether or not an agency will be politically neutral and whether the dividing line between foreign and domestic activities will be strong or blurred.

1 Political neutrality

An agency is politically neutral if it strives to inculcate in its members an ethos of political neutrality and eschews political controversies. It is not politically neutral if there is no cultural stigma against intervening in domestic politics and/or if it repeatedly and deliberately acts against or in favor of one side of the political spectrum.[10] Internal statements by the agency's leaders are more indicative than public ones or those directed at figures outside the agency, since even brazenly political officers often pay lip service to the mantra of bureaucratic neutrality. Edgar Hoover, for instance, repeatedly stated the neutrality of the FBI he led for almost half a century, but behind the scenes he engaged in ferocious political fights, including against presidents.

It would be a mistake to judge whether an intelligence agency is or is not politically neutral looking at the political consequences of its actions rather than at its organizational culture. The actions of a politically neutral intelligence agency can be politically

highly consequential, just like those of a politically neutral judge or prosecutor. The American electorate had a powerful reminder of this days before the 2016 presidential elections, when then FBI Director James Comey informed members of Congress that the FBI had found new emails "that appear to be pertinent to the investigation [of Hillary Clinton's personal email server]". The content of Comey's letter was sufficiently vague as to be beyond dispute, but by reminding the public of Hillary Clinton's email troubles Comey arguably changed the momentum of the electoral campaign and propelled Donald Trump to the White House. The interpretation of Comey's actions remains controversial, yet his personal history, the rest of his tenure as FBI's director and the people who worked closely with him, including former attorney general Eric Holder, all exclude that Comey was intentionally trying to damage Hillary Clinton in the polls.[11] Comey was trying to act transparently and in a non-partisan way, yet he ended up changing the results of an election in a way that even his highly political predecessor, Edgar Hoover, was unable to do.

I argue that an agency that fights against a strong domestic subversive group cannot be politically neutral. To plausibly threaten the overthrow of the government, a political group has to enjoy some support among the population. In a democracy, this support will generally translate into some form of political representation. The political intelligence agency will fight against such a group, its eventual elected representatives and its sympathizers. In other words, the fight against a strong subversive enemy places the agency against one side of the political spectrum, a side that is credibly seeking to gain power.

Knowing that the agency will engage in such a fight, the principals will strive to keep the agency's operations hidden from parliament. The agency cannot reveal to parliament what it is doing if representatives or sympathizers of the domestic subversive group have seats in parliament. Even if no representatives or sympathizers exist, the agency's operations against subversive groups are likely to trouble those members of parliament most concerned with the protection of civil liberties, providing another reason to keep parliament in the dark.

For instance, one of the main enemies of the French intelligence community during the Cold War was the French Communist Party, a party that from 1945 to 1978 obtained between 18% and 28% of the votes and elected dozens of members of parliament. Communism and anti-communism was one of the main cleavages of French politics throughout these decades and beyond, making it impossible for French intelligence to fight against the Communist Party and be politically neutral. Because of the presence of many communist deputies in the legislative chambers, parliamentary oversight was weak, indeed almost non-existent.[12] The same argument applied to the agencies of numerous other Western European countries, including Italy, as we will see.

Of course, subversive groups exist in virtually every country, and intelligence agencies, especially domestic ones, normally fight against them. Yet not all domestic intelligence agencies will be political. If the subversive groups are not strong enough to pose a perceived plausible threat of overthrowing the government, the intelligence agency can afford to be politically neutral. The fight against

its main enemies does not place the intelligence agency against a political faction that is credibly seeking to gain power. The agency's main enemies are unlikely to have many sympathizers in parliament, and the fight against them should arouse fewer concerns in terms of civil liberties. Consider again the case of the FBI. One of its current tasks is to keep under control subversive groups such as anarchists, communists and white supremacists. These groups do not pose a plausible threat of overthrowing the government and by fighting against them the FBI is not automatically dragged into a politically salient issue. If these groups did pose such a severe threat, or were perceived to do so, then the fight against them would be politically salient and the agency waging the fight would not be able to remain politically neutral.

The presence of a strong subversive domestic movement among an agency's priorities is a sufficient condition for an agency to be political, but it is not a necessary one.[13] Principals could, for instance, choose to staff an agency with no strong subversive enemy with party loyalists. This seems to happen rarely in modern democratic settings, but it cannot be excluded. As discussed more extensively in the conclusion, this is one of the limitations of subversion paradox theory, but the theory still explains much of the available historical evidence.

2 Sharpness of the foreign-domestic divide

Most countries have separate intelligence agencies operating at home and abroad, but how sharply the two are divided differs widely. I speak of a sharp dividing line if there is a rule prohibiting an agency from operating either at home or abroad and if this rule is generally respected in practice. If no such regulation exists or if the rule is frequently violated, the dividing line is blurred.

Throughout the twentieth century, the strongest subversive groups have been transnational. For instance, most communist groups received political, ideological and financial support from abroad, mainly from the Soviet Union. No sharp line between domestic and foreign intelligence can be drawn in these cases. To effectively fight against these subversive groups, an intelligence agency will have to track and disrupt its sources of support, its movements and its operations both at home and abroad. If the agency's main enemies do not include a strong subversive group with transnational links, the principals can draw a sharp dividing line between foreign and domestic intelligence.

The priorities of an intelligence agency can change, but the principals' capacity to change them will depend on their degree of control over the agency itself. If the priorities change to include a strong domestic subversive group, there will be a shift towards a political intelligence agency, and vice versa. It would be unrealistic to expect a complete shift from one type to the other, for two reasons. First, political and non-political intelligence agencies are two opposite ideal types located at the extreme of a continuum, and all real cases will fall somewhere in between. Second, bureaucracies are very hard to change and the founding characteristics of an agency are likely to persist long after their original *raison d'être* has ceased to exist.[14]

Step 2: from the agency's type to the principals' degree of control

Principals control an intelligence agency when they can get the agency to obey their orders and instructions and can prevent it from engaging in unauthorized activities[15]. In other words, an agency is under control when it does what its principals want it to do and does not do what its principals do not want it to do.

Principals' control is strong if we never or rarely see the agency engaging in unauthorized activities and/or refusing to obey a request from its principals. If this happens often or regularly, control is low. Of course, many of the unauthorized activities are likely to remain secret. I then use a second indicator of control, namely what principals themselves are saying about the control they exercise. Do we see them stating that they do not control the agency? If so, how frequently? Private statements will be more valuable than public ones. In public, principals have stronger incentives to lie. They may say they are in control even though they are not, in order not to appear powerless, or they may say they are not in control even though they are, in order to deny their own responsibility.

I hypothesize that principals' degree of control will be strong over a non-political intelligence agency and fragile over a political one. Both traits of a non-political intelligence agency should make it easier for principals to control it.

The political neutrality of an intelligence agency is a powerful form of control. The intelligence officers of a non-political intelligence agency are imbued with an ethos of non-involvement in politics and recognize that it is not their job to make policy decisions, much less to undermine their principals' decisions. When their preferences differ from those of their principals, this ethos should kick in, preventing them from intervening in politics.

This form of control parallels what in the field of civil-military relations Samuel Huntington called objective civilian control. Objective control minimizes the power of the military, or of an intelligence agency, by rendering it politically neutral and ready to obey any political group with legitimate power. Its antithesis is military participation in politics.[16] Objective control is not an option when dealing with an intelligence agency that is not politically neutral. Instead, principals will try to control the agency by selecting personnel that shares their own political preferences and ideological inclinations. Control is not achieved by rendering the agency politically neutral, but by making it politically similar to the government. This parallels what Huntington called subjective civilian control. Like Huntington, I argue that it is less effective in the long run than objective control because political preferences are never perfectly aligned. Principals will try to select agents who share their preferences, but principals are likely to have different preferences amongst themselves. Further, the preferences of the intelligence agency are not fixed. If the preferences of the principals diverge significantly from those of the agents, subjective control, unlike objective control, loses its efficacy.[17]

Take the case of French intelligence again. During World War II and in its immediate aftermath, the intelligence services under General Charles De Gaulle were thoroughly politicized, staffed with officers who shared De Gaulle's conservative and

anticommunist preferences and who in some cases even formed the nucleus of the Gaullist party. Many of these officers remained staunch Gaullists throughout the general's self-imposed exile from politics and even plotted against their own government to facilitate De Gaulle's return to power in 1958. However, De Gaulle soon found that his control over these services was weak. After he proceeded to grant independence to Algeria some of those same officers felt betrayed and plotted against him. In the words of one of the foremost historians of French intelligence, De Gaulle, like "virtually every serving president of the Fifth Republic was the target of a scandal or 'dirty trick' with origins deep in secret service conspiracies".[18]

A strong divide between domestic and foreign intelligence is also a powerful instrument of control. Any evidence of domestic operations by the foreign intelligence agency or of foreign operations by the domestic intelligence agency is evidence of unauthorized activities. If no ban on operations at home or abroad exists, principals need to know the content of the operations before being able to detect unauthorized activities.

I have so far discussed the first two steps in subversion paradox theory. First, the presence or absence of a strong subversive group as one of the agency's priorities determines whether an intelligence agency will resemble the ideal type of the political or non-political agency. Second, the characteristics of these ideal types determine the degree of control exercised by the principals, with political intelligence agencies harder to control than non-political ones. The last step is to explain when subversion and politicization occur.

Step 3: explaining politicization and subversion

I hypothesize that only a political intelligence agency will engage in subversion. A non-political intelligence agency, on the other hand, will not engage in subversion and will occasionally suffer from politicization.

As I've shown, the current literature has identified the circumstances under which politicization will occur as being a public commitment by policymakers to a given policy and the emergence of a critical constituency. As Rovner argues, policymakers have an incentive to politicize intelligence because it is secret and perceived as objective and politically neutral. This gives intelligence judgments an added political value, which policymakers can then use in the public arena.[19] The premises which lead to politicization under the circumstances Rovner identifies exist almost exclusively for a non-political intelligence agency. It is only when intelligence is perceived as neutral that politicization becomes a valuable strategy for policymakers wanting to promote their policies in public. This is overwhelmingly more likely to be the case for a non-political intelligence agency, which actually is politically neutral, than for its political counterpart, which is not politically neutral but may be wrongly perceived as such.[20] The scope of existing explanations of politicization is thus largely limited to non-political intelligence agencies, and indeed all studies of politicization are focused on them.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that politicization is a problem that only affects non-political intelligence agencies. On the contrary, a political intelligence agency will regularly construct and use intelligence according to its political goals. The agency is not politically neutral and its products reflect that. Intelligence is manipulated not to build the authoritative impression of consensus within the national security apparatus, but to be used as a weapon within the political arena, generally as a source of blackmail. In a non-political intelligence agency the role of analysis is to provide policymakers with at times uncomfortable truths, whereas in a political intelligence agency analysts do little more than collate intelligence suitable for blackmail and tell policymakers what they want to hear, reinforcing their prejudices and preconceptions. Examples are legions, and we will see some of them in details. The FBI under Edgar Hoover as well as Italian and French intelligence throughout the Cold War all gathered a large supply of compromising information on many politicians and regularly skewed their analyses for political purposes.[21] For political intelligence agencies the manipulation of intelligence is not a temporary aberration, but a routine occurrence.[22]

Whereas both types of agencies should suffer from politicization, albeit for different reasons and with different frequencies, I expect only political intelligence agencies to engage in subversion. A non-political intelligence agency does not engage in subversion because, according to the second step in subversion paradox theory, it is strongly controlled by its principals. If the principals, which include the government, control what the agency is doing, the agency will not be able to remove the government itself. Further, the agency sees its role as politically neutral, and should thus be very reluctant to engage in politics, especially with the forcefulness which a successful subversive attempt would require.

A political intelligence agency, on the other hand, is inclined to engage in subversion, for two reasons. First, as I argued above, the principals' control over such agencies is fragile, lasting only as long as preferences converge. Second, the motivation to subvert is stronger. This stems from the potential conflict between the fight against the subversive threat, the agency's main goal, and the behavior of the government. If the government is incapable or unwilling to fight the subversive threat, intelligence finds itself in a dilemma. It can do nothing and risk compromising its fight against the subversive enemy; or it can remove the government and replace it with one more willing and/or more capable of fighting. On one side stands the failure to accomplish the intelligence agency's goal. On the other side there is the subversion of the government intelligence is supposed to be loyal to.

Not every weak or unwilling government gets subverted by its own intelligence agency. For the agency to subvert, it must believe that its subversive attempt has a high chance of succeeding.[23] For this to be the case there has to be a feasible political alternative to the current government. In other words, can the intelligence agency bring to power a new, more effective government?

I hypothesize that this happens under one of two additional conditions. First, the agency can tilt an upcoming close election one way or another by, for instance, leaking compromising and at times false material against the sitting government or passing valuable information to the opposition. Having no clear boundaries

between domestic and foreign intelligence, a political intelligence agency gathers information both at home and abroad. The domestic information gathering efforts will be mainly targeted at the subversive political movements, but other political actors are unlikely to be spared. The agency has no hesitation to intervene in politics and knows that its main source of power is the information it possesses. Being weakly controlled by its principals, the agency is thus likely to amass vast amounts of compromising materials on politicians of all tendencies. This material can then be leaked to sympathetic news media during an electoral campaign, to cause the defeat of a disliked government.

Second, the agency can find sufficient political support among its principals for the removal of the current government and for the support of a new one. In other words, fractures among the principals give the agency the opportunity to seek a new, stronger government, supported by an alternative, but partially overlapping, coalition of its principals.

This subversive attempt will rarely lead to an authoritarian government, although this has happened in the past.[24] In democratic and generally highly developed countries, anything other than a democratic regime is likely to be considered politically unsustainable. More often, subversion will lead to a partial reshuffling of those in government. Still, I show that even in highly democratic and developed countries governments change via undemocratic procedures and that these countries continue to remain democratic nonetheless. Figure 2.1 below summarizes subversion paradox theory.

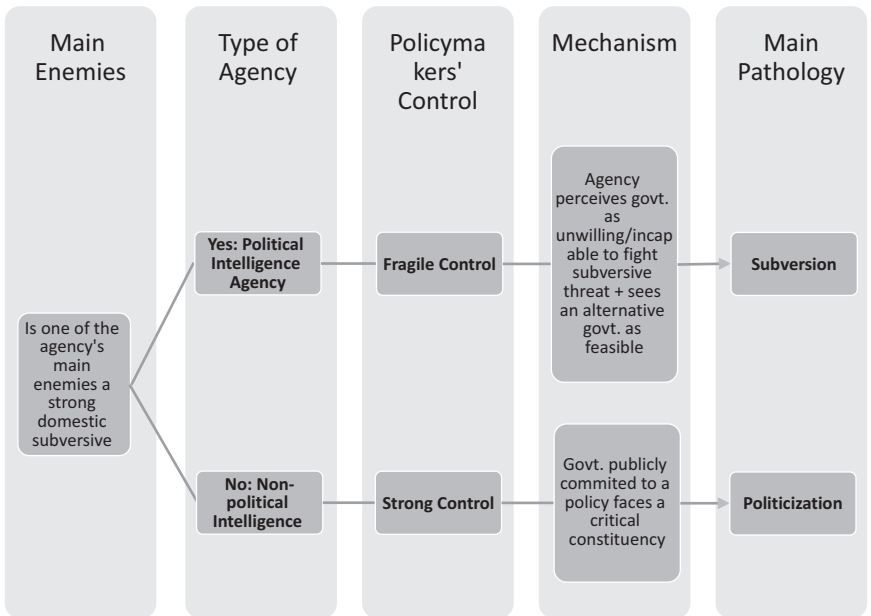
Main Enemies
Type of Agency
Policymakers' Control
Mechanism
Main Pathology
Is one of the agency's main enemies a strong domestic subversive
Yes: Political Intelligence Agency
No: Non-political Intelligence
Fragile Control
Strong Control
Agency perceives govt. as unwilling/incapable to fight subversive threat + sees an alternative govt. as feasible
Govt. publicly commited to a policy faces a critical constituency
Subversion
Politicization

FIGURE 2.1 Causal framework
Source: compiled by the author.

Looking at the first and last step in subversion paradox theory, I can summarize it using the hypothesis that gives it its name:

> Only intelligence agencies that have a perceived strong subversive movement as one of their main enemies will engage in subversion.

Of course, more predictions can be derived from subversion paradox theory, concerning, for instance, the level of policymakers' control and the precise circumstances under which subversion occurs. However, this hypothesis best summarizes the entire theory and allows me to compare it to alternative explanations of subversion.

Because subversion by intelligence agencies within democratic countries has received very little attention in the literature, there are no ready-to-use alternative explanations. I thus derived three alternative explanations from the literature on military coups, possibly the phenomenon which comes closest to intelligence subversion.

1. *Bureaucratic grievances*[25]: an intelligence agency should be more likely to subvert when it is starved for funds and/or when a reform threatens to restrict its turf.
2. *Coup-proofing*[26]: subversion should be less likely if multiple intelligence agencies exist. These agencies will compete and monitor each other, making it harder for each one of them to subvert.
3. *Economic crisis*[27]: the probability of subversion increases if economic growth has been lackluster or negative and if per capita income is low. The destabilizing political effects of economic crises should increase the probability of subversion, which in turn is higher the poorer a country is to begin with.

These explanations and my own are not mutually exclusive, yet it should be useful to compare how well they explain each one of my case studies.

Research design, methods and sources

I test subversion paradox theory using four case studies: the British intelligence community from 1909 to 1924, with two subversive attempts in 1920 and 1924; the Federal Bureau of Investigation from its establishment in 1908 to its attempt to cause Harry Truman's electoral defeat in 1948; the early years of the Central Intelligence Agency; and Italian military intelligence from 1943 to 1964, with two episodes of subversion in 1960 and 1964. None of my case studies focus on politicization. Given the attention that has been dedicated to these cases, investigating them here would have been repetitive. Instead, by studying the establishment of the CIA I aim to explain why it became vulnerable to politicization and invulnerable to subversion.

Any case selection on subversion by intelligence agencies faces a fundamental problem. Subversion is the most secret activity conducted by the most secretive parts of the government. The available evidence is only a small fraction of what actually

happened, and it is available often only because subversion failed or because the participants in the events decided to reveal something about what they knew. In this topic more than others, any generalization will be provisional as new evidence may arise to falsify it. Scholars thus only have a small sample to work with, and it is probably a biased one. This bias cannot be eliminated, but it can be reduced by selecting cases that show variation in terms of whether subversion succeeded or failed and of how the evidence came to light. My case selection does this by studying both cases in which subversion succeeded (Britain in 1924, Italy in 1960 and partially in 1964) and those in which it failed (Britain in 1920 and the FBI in 1948). Further, I chose cases of subversion that vary in terms of how long they remained secret and why they were revealed. In Britain in 1924 and in Italy in 1964 the victims of the plot (or their allies in the media) quickly denounced what had happened. The other cases came to light years or decades after the facts thanks to the memoirs or diaries of those who plotted to subvert or benefited from it.

This case selection has other advantages, summarized in Table 2.1 below. First, I compare the FBI and the CIA and explain why two radically different types of agencies, an out-of-control political agency and a well-controlled non-political agency, coexisted in the same country for decades. Second, by studying the FBI and British intelligence I can show what happens when a non-political intelligence agency starts to have as one of its main enemies a strong subversive enemy. This enables me to test subversion paradox theory under the best possible circumstances: holding as many factors as possible constant except for the theory's causal factor.[28] Third, Italian military intelligence and the CIA are two extreme cases closely resembling my ideal types of, respectively, political and non-political intelligence agencies, and it is when studying extreme cases that causal mechanisms should be most evident. Fourth, by analyzing intelligence agencies primarily dedicated to domestic intelligence, such as the FBI and MI5, as well as those primarily dedicated to foreign and military intelligence, such as SIS and Italian military intelligence, I

TABLE 2.1 Case selection and research design

Country	*Intelligence agency*	*Time period*	*Type of case*
Great Britain	Entire intelligence community	1908–1924	Within-case, across time variation
USA	FBI and CIA	FBI, 1908–1948; establishment of the CIA and some of its most controversial episodes	Within-country, across agencies variation; within-case, across time variation (FBI); extreme case of non-political intelligence agency (CIA)
Italy	SIFAR (military intelligence)	1943–1964	Extreme case of political intelligence agency

Source: compiled by the author

show that both engaged in subversion under the same circumstances. Fifth, I apply the theory to two well-established democracies, the US and UK, and to what was then an emerging democracy, namely Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. Sixth, Italian intelligence is little known among intelligence scholars and almost nothing has been written in English. This is a pity because a long series of secret service scandals and investigations have made an unusually high number of documents available. Further, Italy plays a prominent part in intelligence histories, especially because of the CIA's role in the fight against the Italian Communist Party, but Italian intelligence is rarely mentioned. Lastly, I show that the prevailing model of intelligence–policy relations does not even explain important historical aspects of intelligence–policy relations in Britain and in the US, the two countries it should more easily explain.

Although no one has studied the universe of cases, the number of known episodes of subversion appears to be too small for statistical analysis. Further, all of these episodes require too detailed a knowledge to be picked up by large N datasets. Indeed, the existing datasets on coups and coups attempts do not include any of the episodes I study.[29]

I instead employ comparative historical analysis to test subversion paradox theory. Several arguments justify this choice. First, this research is exploratory. It does not test pre-existing theories but develops a new theory to explain a phenomenon that has until now been largely ignored. As John Gerring argues, case studies enjoy a natural advantage in exploratory research because "lightbulb" moments are more likely when closely engaging with a particular case.[30] Second, it would be difficult to use correlation analysis to test a theory that is largely about a causal mechanism. I could not test this theory relying solely on data-set observations, i.e. on scores on variables. More important are causal process observations, namely observations about the context, process and mechanisms linking the variables,[31] and these are best obtained conducting case studies. Lastly, the core goal of this research is to explain outcomes in individual cases. I start with the cases and their generally known outcomes and then work backward using a causes-of-effects approach, the approach associated with qualitative research.[32]

The historical literature on intelligence is littered with works that have little documentary support and make a selective use of the evidence. It is also a common practice to cite what other authors have said without saying where those authors found their information and how it is supported by primary evidence, making it impossible to verify other scholars' analysis.[33]

To avoid these pitfalls, I have relied as much as possible on primary sources, especially those that give direct evidence of the activities of intelligence agencies. These sources are precious, but also rare and often not accessible. I thus complemented them with the sources produced by the direct participants in the events, albeit in circumstances in which they had an incentive to give a biased account of the events, such as memoirs and testimonies in front of investigative commissions. When I could not access the primary sources that were available to another scholar, generally because the scholar in question had privileged access to them, I either used the direct citations of the documents, or I made sure that the scholar's interpretation is widely accepted. When no overlap existed I either left the question open or explicitly argued why I preferred one interpretation over the other.[34]

Notes

1 For instance, Rovner (2011), pp. 32–33.
2 Ganser (2005) is the most ambitious comparative work on the subject, albeit hardly a reliable one.
3 Intelligence agencies often do more than collecting and analyzing information. Further, non-state actors such as terrorist groups or intergovernmental organizations can have intelligence agencies as well. Still, the focus here is on the core functions of collections and analysis only within states.
4 I thus exclude those heads of state with little more than ceremonial power, such as the British monarch.
5 The inclusion of foreign governments and the exclusion of parliaments may seem surprising, but is justified by the empirical evidence. Parliaments have generally played a minor role in intelligence affairs. Even where their powers are stronger, their role is largely limited to oversight, rather than control. They check that the agency is operating effectively and within the confines of the law, but they do not give orders. Instead, governments have repeatedly created hierarchical relationships with intelligence agencies of foreign countries, influencing their budgets, their personnel selection and, more or less successfully, their conduct, as we will see in the chapter on Italy. Walsh (2010), especially ch. 1, similarly applies the concept of hierarchy to some relationships between intelligence agencies of different countries. See also my own contribution in Faini (2016) and, on the relationship between the US government and German intelligence, Ruffner (2006).
6 I use the terms "main enemies" and "main priorities" interchangeably.
7 The same goals are discussed in Born and Caparini (2007), p. 163, and in Bruneau and Boraz (2007).
8 For brevity, I sometimes refer to this as a strong subversive threat.
9 It is important to distinguish between principals' belief in the existence of a strong subversive threat and the existence of such a threat among an intelligence agency's priorities. The two will generally coincide, but not in all cases, for three reasons. First, principals may choose to design multiple agencies, assigning to only some of them the fight against the strong subversive threat. Second, principals may disagree as to whether such a threat exists. Third, after the agency has been created, principals and the agency's officials may disagree as to whether or not a plausible threat of subversion still exists. If I were to use principals' belief as my independent variable, I would not be able to explain the interesting dynamics that stem from these disagreements.
10 Recruitment patterns should also be a useful indicator of political neutrality, although it is likely to be hard to find public statements on the criteria that were used. Excluding a large section of the population based on its political leanings is indicative of the political nature of the agency.
11 For two excellent interpretations of Comey's behavior, see Scott Shane and Sharon LaFraniere "James Comey Role Recalls Hoover's FBI, Fairly or Not", *The New York Times*, 31 October 2016, and Matt Apuzzo and Segio Peçanha "These Are the Bad (and Worse) Options Comey Faced", *The New York Times* (online edition), 2 November 2016.
12 Porch (1995) and (2007) and Faligot and Krop (1989).
13 The logical flip side of this argument is that the absence of a strong subversive threat among an agency's main enemies is necessary but not sufficient for the agency to be non-political.
14 Scholars of public administration have long acknowledged this point. For the application of this argument to intelligence, see Zegart (2000), ch. 1, Zegart (2007), ch. 3, and Bruneau and Boraz (2007), p. 3.
15 Not every intelligence activity requires an explicit authorization by the principals. Some activities are not important enough to be approved by busy policymakers and others are deliberately not explicitly authorized to ensure that policymakers can plausibly deny knowing about them. When I speak of unauthorized activities I do not refer to these types of activities, but to those that contrast with policymakers' preferences and interests.

16 Huntington (1957), pp. 83–84. Borrowing from the literature on civil-military relations is common in intelligence studies. See, for instance, Bar Joseph (1995) and Bruneau and Boraz (2007), especially pp. 4–6.
17 I do not explain when and why preferences will converge or diverge. Instead, I argue that significant preference divergences will be frequent enough that control based on preferences will be fragile.
18 Porch (2007), pp. 130–132. For greater details, see Porch (1995), pp. 206–207, 273–275, 294, 393–396 and 421. Faligot and Krop (1989), pp. 138 and 182, take a skeptical view of similar arguments but provide little evidence to support their skepticism.
19 Rovner (2011), p. 48, notes: "intelligence is useful because it carries an air of detached objectivity, but this image cannot last if policymakers regularly use public intelligence to advocate for policy choices".
20 The FBI under Hoover is the only case I could find of a political intelligence agency that managed, with some success, to build a public image of political neutrality.
21 On French intelligence, see Porch (2007), pp. 130–133. On the FBI and Italian intelligence, see the respective chapters in this book.
22 The manipulation of the evidence, including of the public's perception of the subversive threat, poses a problem for subversion paradox theory, but hardly an insurmountable one. Its independent variable, the existence of a perceived strong subversive threat among the agency's main enemies, looks at the perception of the principals at the moment of the agency's creation and of the agency after that. I thus need to identify what the agency really perceives in terms of the severity of the threat, regardless of the manipulation of public's perception of the threat by the agency itself.
23 For a similar argument concerning coups, see Powell (2012), pp. 1019–1021.
24 For instance, in Brazil in 1964, in Greece in 1967 and in Chile in 1973. For a list of coups and coup attempts since 1960, see Powell (2010).
25 Collier and Hoeffler (2005) speak more in general of a "grievance motive".
26 Quinlivan (1999) and Powell (2012). For a skeptical view of the effectiveness of coup-proofing, see Bohmelt and Pilster (2015).
27 Powell (2012) and Collier and Hoeffler (2005).
28 This is referred to as the Most Similar Systems Design or John Stuart Mill's method of difference. See Anckar (2008).
29 One of the most comprehensive datasets on coups explicitly excludes coup plots as unfit for reliable coding. Most of the episodes I study would be considered coup plots. See Powell and Thyne (2011), pp. 251–252. The Polity IV dataset which includes coup attempts does not include any of the episodes I study. The dataset is available at www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html.
30 Gerring (2004) distinguishes between exploratory research, which first generates a theory and tests it, and confirmatory research, whose primary task is to verify or falsify a pre-existing set of hypotheses. See pp. 349–350.
31 For the distinction between data-set observations and causal process observations see Brady, Collier and Seawright (2010), p. 24.
32 The distinction is between the causes-of-effects approach, in which the researcher starts from the outcome and then moves backward toward the causes, and the effects-of-causes approach, in which the researcher does not know the outcome in advance and applies the treatment to then measure its effects. See Mahoney and Goertz (2006), pp. 230–232.
33 For a discussion of the problems of imprecise citations in political science, see Moravcsik (2010), especially pp. 29–30. The problem applies to historical works as well, at least in the intelligence literature.
34 Lustick (1996), p. 616, calls these techniques quasi-triangulation, i.e. finding the overlap between the interpretations of scholars of different schools and with different sympathies, and explicit triage, i.e. explicitly stating why one historiographical interpretation was preferred over another.

3

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE IN THE 1920S

Introduction

"Wild Bill" Donovan was impressed. During the two trips William Donovan made to Britain in the second half of 1940 on behalf of President Roosevelt, his British hosts, from Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the head of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) Sir Stewart Menzies, had done all they could to convince him of Britain's resolve to resist Hitler's advance. Donovan, in Menzies' words, had "more influence with the president than Colonel House had with Mr. Wilson" and he was Britain's chance to counter the pessimistic reports of the US Ambassador Joseph Kennedy.[1]

Britain's resolve was not the only lesson that Donovan brought back to Washington. In a letter in May 1941 to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, a Republican in a Democratic administration, Donovan expressed his conviction that "intelligence operations should not be controlled by party exigencies".[2] He drew that lesson from what he believed to be the political neutrality of the British intelligence services, a lesson he then put into practice as head of the Office of Strategic Services and which decisively shaped the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The idea that intelligence should be politically neutral would have been greeted with a smile by some of Donovan's colleagues across the Atlantic. Menzies himself, as well as Churchill's special adviser on intelligence, Desmond Morton, had probably played a role in the leak of a forged letter in the electoral campaign of 1924, meant to remove the first Labour government. Others would have probably remembered that the recently deceased chief of SIS, Hugh Sinclair, had plotted with other intelligence and military chiefs to force Lloyd George's resignation in the summer of 1920. Yet, Donovan was not so wide of the mark. As the fear of leftist subversives subsided, the political intelligence agencies of the 1920s, that twice tried to remove their own government, had gradually transformed themselves into non-political intelligence agencies largely dedicated to the fight against Germany, what they had been designed to do when first established in 1909.

This chapter explains why the non-political British intelligence community created in 1909 transformed itself into a political intelligence community that tried twice to remove a sitting government. Unlike the other chapters, the focus here is on the entire intelligence community rather than just one agency. As we will see, the shift in priority affected the entire intelligence community, and all agencies changed accordingly. The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part illustrates the establishment of the Secret Service Bureau in 1909, following one of the frequent German spy scares of Edwardian Britain, and shows how the Bureau's organizational features corresponded to the ideal type of the non-political intelligence agency. The second part analyzes the transformation of the intelligence community in the direction of the ideal type of political intelligence, after the shift in priorities from Germany to Bolshevik subversion. The third part reconstructs the so-called Henry Wilson plot of 1920, when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff conspired with the heads of several intelligence services to force the resignation of Prime Minister Lloyd George, and then analyzes the second round of intelligence reform in 1921. The fourth part analyzes the Zinoviev letter affair of 1924. The fifth part concludes assessing subversion paradox theory's performance.

The creation of the Secret Service Bureau and the German threat

The British intelligence community obtained a firm institutional footing with the establishment in 1909 of the Secret Service Bureau, the institutional forefather of SIS and MI5. The Bureau was established following a recommendation by a sub-committee of the Committee on Imperial Defence (CID), which was then approved by the cabinet led by the Liberal prime minister Asquith.[3]

The sub-committee "was formed at the request of the General Staff, who regard with apprehension the increasing amount of German espionage that is taking place in this country."[4] It stated there was "no doubt (…) that an extensive system of German espionage exists in this country and that we have no organization for keeping touch with that espionage and for accurately determining its extent or objectives".[5] Accordingly, the Bureau's main enemy was Wilhelmine Germany[6] and, as Churchill said a decade later, its "restricted energies were almost entirely directed against Germany".[7]

The Secret Service Bureau was designed to fight this system of German espionage in Britain and to create a British espionage network in continental Europe. Before that, Britain had no such network to speak of and the attempts to gather intelligence, especially on the German fleet, were amateurish and largely unsuccessful.[8] The German espionage system turned out to be much less extensive than what many too excitable writers believed. The figures publicized in open hearings and in the press ranged from 50,000 to 350,000 German spies, but with the arrest of a mere twenty-two German agents, the German spy network was almost entirely destroyed at the outbreak of World War I.[9]

The military was the natural locus for an agency designed to fight against the supposed invasion plans and espionage rings of a foreign power. The Secret Service Bureau was in fact established as a military intelligence agency. The first chiefs of

what will then become SIS and MI5 were at first the representatives of the Admiralty and of the War Office, respectively.[10] These representatives immediately drew a sharp line between foreign and domestic intelligence. A meeting in October 1909 sorted out the workings of the newly created Secret Service Bureau, formally establishing that the representative of the War Office, Colonel Vernon Kell, "should undertake the whole of the Home work– both Naval and Military" and that the representative of the Admiralty, Commander Mansfield George Smith-Cumming, "should have charge of all the foreign –both N & M".[11] In 1910 these two different branches became two different organizations.[12] The first branch was initially known as MI1c. It later became the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and passed under the control of the Foreign Office. The second was generally referred to as MI5 and was controlled by the War Office.[13]

During their first decade, MI5 and SIS resembled the ideal type of a non-political intelligence agency. There is no evidence of them having a political inclination or engaging in any political activity. Further, as we have seen, the divide between domestic and foreign intelligence was sharp.[14]

Reforming intelligence to fight domestic subversion: the 1919 Secret Service Committee

By 1917 German spy scares had given way to the fear of pacifists and domestic unrest.[15] The Bolshevik Revolution in November heightened these fears even further, prompting a flurry of proposals to reform the secret services to fight this transnational subversive threat,[16] all of whom pushed in the direction of a more political intelligence community.

The two most important proposals were made as the war came to an end. The first came from Sir Basil Thomson, head of Special Branch, the intelligence unit of Scotland Yard. Thomson joined forces with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Walter Long, and proposed creating a unified civilian head of the entire intelligence community. The second proposal came from the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI), Lt. General William Thwaites, who days after the Armistice proposed the merger of MI5 and SIS into one organization under the War Office.

In a memorandum to Thomson in October 1918, Secretary Long had argued that there was "in this country a very strong Bolshevik agency which succeeds, owing to the want of efficient Secret Service".[17] British intelligence was "in a wholly unsatisfactory condition" to fight the menace of subversion, which instead required a unified Civil Secret Service, capable of dealing with "the Bolshevik, Syndacalist and the German spy".[18] Long's proposal and his list of priorities clearly went in the direction of a secret service whose competences travelled across the domestic/foreign divide. Thomson enthusiastically embraced Long's proposal, and went even further. With the Director of Naval Intelligence "Blinker" Hall, Thomson devised a plan for a single civilian head (presumably himself) of the entire intelligence community, comprising naval, military, foreign and home intelligence. Home intelligence would have dealt with questions of labor unrest, revolutionary matters, aliens and counter-espionage.

Thomson and Hall were aware that such an intelligence agency would hardly have pleased the labor movement and the Labour Party. They thus proposed to finance such a scheme with the interests of a secret War Loan investment, rather than via the Secret Service vote in parliament. The motivation for taking away from parliament this form of control over the secret services was eminently political: "It is very doubtful", they wrote, "whether Parliament will continue to vote an adequate sum for Secret Services after the War, especially if a Labour Government comes into power".[19] Long accepted Thomson's scheme as his own and sent it to Prime Minister Lloyd George as the war was coming to an end. Following Long's memorandum, the Cabinet established the Secret Service Committee (SSC) in January 1919, chaired by the acting Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon.

The minutes of the meetings of the SSC reveal that the tension between a political and a non-political intelligence agency marked the process of intelligence reform.[20] Thomson's and Long's proposal challenged the sharp distinction between domestic and foreign intelligence, and immediately encountered the opposition of the Foreign Office, which feared encroachment on its own bureaucratic turf. At the SSC's first meeting on 3 February, the Permanent Under-Secretary (PUS) at the Foreign Office, Lord Hardinge, quickly reminded everyone of the distance which separated its secret service, SIS, from anything having to do with domestic affairs: "the Secret Service run by the Foreign Office deals with foreign countries alone. It has nothing to do with information to be obtained in Great Britain, Ireland or the Colonies". Unable to overcome this opposition, Thomson and his supporters were forced to give up on their attempt to take control of SIS. Nonetheless, the reform that was ultimately implemented still led to the creation of an intelligence agency that was not politically neutral and had no clear boundary between domestic and foreign intelligence.

In its third meeting on 4 April the SSC adopted the proposal contained in a memo written by Thomson and circulated by Home Secretary Shortt on 31 March, creating the Directorate of Intelligence–Home Office (DIHO). It was clear to Thomson himself that DIHO was not politically neutral. In his memo, Thomson wrote of the importance of having DIHO within Scotland Yard and of keeping executive and information gathering powers under one person. In part this was because "the power to take quick action on the receipt of information would be seriously curtailed if there were not a body of Police Officers under the immediate orders of the Director of Intelligence". However, "an even stronger reason why (…) the Director should be connected with New Scotland Yard" was that by doing so the new domestic intelligence agency could avoid public criticism from the labor movement. It was generally understood, Thomson argued, that it was Scotland Yard's duty to deal with labor unrest and revolutionary activities. Only by providing DIHO with "an effective cover" within Scotland Yard could "labour agitators" in the House of Commons be put to rest.[21] Thomson thus realized that his new, political intelligence agency needed some form of cover in order to avoid becoming the target of politically motivated criticisms and that this cover could only be provided by a well-established agency, perceived as politically neutral.

Despite the Foreign Office's attempt to preserve a sharp divide between foreign and domestic intelligence, DIHO extended its reach to international matters. Its list of main enemies included "the progress of Bolshevism abroad", "labour unrest organisation", "Indian anarchist matters", "Irish matters" and "revolutionary matters at home".[22]

Simultaneously, a similar bureaucratic infighting was taking place over Lt. Gen. Thwaites' proposal to merge SIS and MI5. Again, SIS and the Foreign Office were against it. In the words of the SIS Chief, Mansfield-Cumming, "the methods, personnel and venue for the two services are entirely different": counter-espionage "is done in England (…) espionage is conducted abroad".[23] A few months later Thwaites tried again, encouraged by the Director of Naval Intelligence Hugh Sinclair. Cumming again rejected the merger, adding another revealing argument: given "the prospect of a Labour government in the near future", it was "necessary that the S[ecretary] of S[tate] for Foreign Affairs, with his hand on his heart, should be able to declare that the Secret Service has no connection with the control of labour unrest". Since it had "clearly been proved that money from these strikes" had been "supplied by Bolsheviks", an agency resulting from the merger of domestic and foreign intelligence would inevitably "be connected with labour and Bolshevik troubles".[24]

The Foreign Office and SIS successfully killed the proposals for a merger, but SIS and the other intelligence agencies still followed a trajectory similar to that of Special Branch. They were all tasked with at least parts of the countersubversive fight and they all became more political. Soon, they proved to be harder to control, twice engaging in subversion within a few years.

The Anglo-Soviet trade negotiations, the Henry Wilson plot and the role of intelligence

The motive behind the plot: "Is L.G. a traitor?"[25]

In January 1920, British prime minister David Lloyd George, a Liberal governing in an increasingly tense coalition with the Conservative Party, became one of the first Western leaders to seek to rebuild trade relations with Russia. Lloyd George expressed his faith in the sobering influence of commerce, to the point of stating that "the moment trade was established in Russia, Communism would go".[26] In May, an official Russian trade delegation arrived in London. This was the first step towards recognition of the revolutionary Soviet regime by a major Western government. Many British military and intelligence officers saw it with incredulous discomfort and suspicion, viewing trade as an opportunity given to the Bolsheviks to spread subversion.[27]

Among high-ranking British officers, the most troubled by Lloyd George's accommodating policy towards the Soviets was probably the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson. Throughout the previous year Wilson had repeatedly disagreed with Lloyd George over the government's handling of labor strikes and over Britain's intervention in support of the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia, seeing both as too timid. In early 1919 Wilson started to doubt Lloyd George's commitment to the fight against communism, writing in his diary of his

"tacit agreement with Bolshevism".[28] On 15 January 1920, Wilson went even further, "wondering if L.G. is a traitor & a Bolshevist" and promising to "watch him very carefully". Wilson raised this question repeatedly in his diary throughout 1920, convincing himself that Lloyd George was indeed a Bolshevist traitor.[29]

Probably few, if any, high-ranking officers shared Wilson's beliefs early in 1920, although we lack the evidence to say this conclusively. By August 1920 this was no longer the case. At the heart of the dispute was a Soviet trade delegation visiting London. Lloyd George's critics in the armed forces, the intelligence services and in the Conservative Party argued that the Soviet delegates had to be expelled and their misdeeds exposed in full by publishing the intercepted telegrams between them and Moscow. Since their arrival in May, the Soviet delegates had tried to promote subversion by, among other things, providing funds to the communist *Daily Herald* and to the "Hands off Russia" committee, which campaigned against a British intervention in the then ongoing war between Poland and Bolshevik Russia.[30] Thanks to Thomson's network of informers and to the Soviet telegrams intercepted by the Government Code & Cypher School, the Cabinet and high-ranking officials knew what the Soviet delegates were up to. The British government had repeatedly said that the negotiations were subject to the condition of not undertaking hostile action and not conducting propaganda against one another,[31] giving strength to the arguments of those within the Cabinet who wanted to expel the Soviet delegates.

The delegation's attempts to spread subversion initially seemed successful. In August 1920 leftist disturbances reached unprecedented levels, with the establishment of the Soviet-supported Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and the creation by the labor movement of the Council of Action, an organization meant to oppose British intervention against Russia in the Russo-Polish war. In his periodic reports on revolutionary organizations, DIHO director Thomson stated that the "spirit of revolt [was] growing every day" and seemed to permeate "the great mass of the workers which is usually apathetic".[32]

Nonetheless, Lloyd George kept refusing to expel the Russian trade delegation. The highest intelligence and military officers now convinced themselves that Lloyd George was unwilling to fight the Bolshevik threat, if he was not altogether complicit with it. Henry Wilson decided it was time to act. On 17 August, he met with his own staff and with the chiefs of staff of all home Army Commands to plan for "a possible war with the 'Council of Action". The next day, Wilson had a meeting with his deputy General Sir Charles Harington, the Director of Military Intelligence Lt. General Thwaites and DIHO director Thomson. Frustrated by Lloyd George's inaction, Thomson stated "that he was seriously *beginning* to think L.G. was a traitor".[33] Several leading intelligence and military officers were thus motivated to subvert.

A fractured Cabinet and a higher loyalty

The anti-Lloyd George conspirators in the military and intelligence services tried to exploit the fractures within the Cabinet to force Lloyd George to resign. The extraordinary nature of the British government at this time, a coalition government

initially formed in wartime with a prime minister without a strong party behind him, probably convinced them that removing the government was feasible.

Henry Wilson reached out to the mainly Conservative members of the Cabinet who favored the expulsion of the Russian delegates and the publication of the intercepted telegrams showing their support for British subversives. The same day he met with Thomson, Wilson wrote to Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, telling him that he

> found it difficult to understand the attitude of LG & of the Cabinet, that telegrams of this sort put a severe strain on our (Soldiers) loyalty to the Cabinet as though we wished to be loyal to the government we had a higher loyalty still to our King & to England. Winston was much excited. He said it was quite true that LG was dragging the Cabinet step by step towards Bolshevism (…). He asked to write a note on the subject.[34]

Churchill could have hardly missed the meaning of Wilson's words. Speaking of the higher loyalty that he and his soldiers owed to the King and to England, Wilson was threatening to overthrow the government.

Wilson again used menacing language in the memorandum which Churchill asked him to write. He stated that

> the authority of the Government, its right and its power to govern, has been rudely challenged by the Council of Action. (…) These [intercepted Russian] telegrams establish beyond all possibility of dispute (…) that [the Russian delegates] Kameneff and Krassin while enjoying the hospitality of England are engaged, with the Soviet government, in a plot to create red revolution and ruin in this country [and] that the 'Council of Action' is in the closest touch and collaboration with the Russian Soviet for the downfall and ruin of England. (…) [I]t is a military necessity to expose the whole of this traitorous combination (…). I await the decision of the government.[35]

Wilson did not specify what he would have done had "the decision of the government" proved unsatisfactory. He knew that the memorandum could have forced him to resign. When he said this to his deputy Harington and to the DMI Thwaites, both of whom agreed with what he had written, they said that in that case they would have also resigned, and so would have the Director of Military Operations, Major General Sir Percy de Blaquiere Radcliffe.[36]

A collective resignation by the highest-ranking military and intelligence officers would have likely brought down the government. To increase the chances of doing so, Wilson sought to enlist more high-ranking officers. He did so with great success, obtaining the support of the First Sea Lord Admiral Betty; the Director of Naval Intelligence (and future SIS Chief), Rear Admiral Sinclair; the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Hugh Trenchard and DIHO director Sir Basil Thomson.[37] The heads of the armed services and of both military and civilian intelligence (with the exclusion of MI5 and SIS, whom do not appear to have been contacted[38]), were thus on Wilson's side.

The next step, and the one which proved fatal to the subversive attempt, was to obtain enough support within the Cabinet to install an alternative government. The political principals of intelligence and military officers were divided, but those who wanted to expel the Russian trade delegation had still not agreed to try to remove Lloyd George's government and form a new one. Wilson again turned to Churchill. The Secretary of State for War had just written a memo demanding the expulsion of the Russian delegation and lamenting the "perturbation" that their continued presence was causing among British officers. The memo was supposed to accompany Wilson's own memorandum and be distributed to the Cabinet, but Churchill hesitated to send it. On 24 August, Wilson once again resorted to threats to convince him: "I warned him that we Soldiers might have to take action if he did not & that in that case his position would be impossible".[39] Churchill sent the letter the next day, but accompanied it with a much more conciliatory letter addressed to Lloyd George, of which Wilson was unaware.

On the 26th, after receiving estimates that 100,000 former soldiers were among the revolutionaries, Wilson decided to stockpile rifles, machine guns and tanks at infantry depots throughout Britain "to start off Loyalists when they join up". In the meantime, Thomson and Sinclair were circulating papers showing the connection between the trade delegation and the subversive attempts in the labor movement and in the Navy. The three were meeting almost daily, fulminating the prime minister and considering leaking to the press the intercepted telegrams. On 1 September, they wrote to Churchill arguing that "the presence of the Russian Trading Delegation has become in our opinion the gravest danger which this country has had to face since the Armistice. Thus being so, we think that the publication of the de-cyphered cables has become so imperative that we must face the risks that will be entailed." They anticipated that by expelling the Soviet delegates "the movement for establishing Councils of Action all over the country may break up".[40]

Although Wilson's position was supported by Churchill, the Foreign Secretary Curzon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Austen Chamberlain and the Secretary of State for the Colonies Milner, no one was willing to break with the prime minister. This proved to be the fatal weakness of Wilson's plot. The plotters, motivated by Lloyd George's perceived treacherous behavior, believed that the divisions within the Cabinet would have allowed them to install an alternative government, but these divisions turned out to be insufficient to push Lloyd George to resign.

When Lloyd George reconvened the Cabinet on 10 September, those who, like Churchill and Curzon, had taken the hardest line on the expulsion of the delegates and the publication of the intercepts, were strikingly absent. The Cabinet decided that Lloyd George would have warned Kamenev that he had violated his terms of entrance, without specifying the nature of the evidence, and told him not to return after his planned departure for Moscow. The Cabinet also postponed the decision on whether to publish the telegrams in full. Publishing them would have delivered a blow to the most extremist elements in the labor movement by giving proof of Soviet perfidy, but it would have also alerted the Soviets that all of their messages were being intercepted, likely compromising the source.

The Cabinet's decision on 10 September marked the failure of Wilson's plot to remove the prime minister, even though Wilson continued to rail against him in his diary and to threaten to resign.[41] Nothing came of these threats, but the plotters did not abandon the scene without striking one final blow against the government. On 14 September, the anti-Bolshevik *Daily Mail* and *Morning Post* published detailed accounts of the financial transactions between the *Daily Herald* and the Soviet trade delegation, obtained from the intercepted telegrams. The most likely source of this leak was an intelligence officer who shared Wilson's outrage at the Cabinet's decision not to publish the intercepts.[42] It was an important precedent to the Zinoviev letter episode four years later, when the *Daily Mail* was once again at the receiving end of a leak of a supposed Soviet document.[43]

The 1921 Fisher committee and the transformation of SIS and MI5

Having realized the drawbacks associated with political intelligence agencies, British policymakers tried to bring back British intelligence in the direction of a non-political intelligence community. As long as British intelligence continued to fight a strong subversive enemy, however, these attempts were doomed to fail.

In 1921, the Cabinet appointed a committee chaired by the Permanent Under-secretary of the Treasury, Warren Fisher, "to examine the expenditure on Secret Service (…) and to report their recommendations to the Cabinet for reducing expenditure and avoiding overlapping".[44] The Fisher committee found little overlapping between the various intelligence branches, and saw room for reform only with respect to Thomson's DIHO.[45] The committee argued that DIHO's reports on revolutionary activities abroad "frequently contain[ed] misleading, if not absolutely erroneous, information regarding matters by no means invariably within the purview of Sir Basil Thomson's work". In other words, DIHO's work lacked objectivity and did not respect the boundary between foreign and domestic intelligence.[46] The committee recommended the incorporation of DIHO in Scotland Yard, reversing the decision made in 1919. Prime Minister Lloyd George used the Fisher committee report to force Thomson to resign, despite protests by several of his supporters, and a subsequently reconvened Secret Service committee decided to incorporate DIHO into Scotland Yard and to reaffirm a firm boundary between domestic and foreign intelligence.[47]

With DIHO's demise, MI5 and SIS were left as the dominant agencies in the British intelligence community. Both of them were tasked with the fight against a strong subversive enemy and, in accordance with subversion paradox theory, both soon engaged in subversion. The change was striking especially for SIS, which until then had insisted that it had to stay away from anything having to do with labor unrest.[48] Under the leadership of its new director, Hugh Sinclair, the former Director of Naval Intelligence who had supported Thomson's reforms and plotted against Lloyd George, SIS regularly intervened in British politics and operated at home and abroad.[49] In the words of its official historian,

> SIS's role in monitoring revolutionary activities of various sorts, especially those of international Communism, meant that no hard-and-fast rule could be consistently applied against working within the United Kingdom. If, say, a suspected Communist agent was being tracked by SIS across Continental Europe and came to Britain, it might not be feasible or, indeed, desirable suddenly to hand over the operation to MI5 or Special Branch at the moment the suspect entered the country.[50]

Barely a year after having started to fight subversion at home under Sinclair's new leadership, SIS attempted to remove its own government.

The first Labour government and the Zinoviev letter affair of 1924

In January 1924 the leader of the Labour Party Ramsay MacDonald took office as prime minister. Although the Conservatives had gained more seats in the general election in December, they did not have a majority in the House of Commons. The Liberals decided to support the Labour Party rather than the Conservatives, providing the necessary votes for the first Labour government in British history.

The relationship between the Labour government and the intelligence community was marked by mutual suspicion from the start, and intelligence officials soon convinced themselves that the government was perilously soft on communism.[51] The evidence is plentiful. MI5 had long monitored MacDonald, even recommending him for prosecution for making seditious speeches during World War I. MI6 officers were careful not to discuss anything sensitive within earshot of Labour ministers. When first given Special Branch's weekly report on revolutionary organizations, MacDonald was dismissive, remarking that "little (…) in it was likely to be unfamiliar (…) to anyone who reads the *Workers' Weekly*" and that it could have been more "attractive and indeed entertaining if its survey were extended to cover (…) the Fascist movement in this country". He also asked to see his own Special Branch file, but the new head of Special Branch, Wyndham Childs, refused. The meeting confirmed Childs' belief that the government did not take the communist threat seriously enough.[52] Such belief was widely shared across the British intelligence community, leading it to withhold certain information from the government. For instance, MacDonald was probably the only member of his Cabinet who knew of the activities of Britain's signals intelligence agency, the Government Code & Cypher School, and even he was less than fully informed. When Churchill returned to power in November 1924, he discovered that MacDonald had been kept in ignorance of many of the intercepts.[53]

MacDonald's policy towards the Soviet Union increased the intelligence community's suspicion even further. Serving as both prime minister and Foreign Secretary, one of his first acts in office was to extend *de jure* recognition to the Soviet Union. Starting in April, the government negotiated a series of treaties on virtually all outstanding questions with the Soviet Union, which were then signed on 4 August. The most controversial point in the treaties was the provision of a

loan by the British government to the Soviet Union, in exchange for the settlement of Russian debts dating from before the Revolution. The loan struck a chord in the right-wing press, which denounced it as "money for murderers" and accused the Labour Party of having succumbed to pressure from the extreme left.[54] Ten days before the signing of the treaties, a Scottish communist journalist called John Campbell had written an open letter to the armed forces, asking them to refuse to fight and to use their weapons to smash the capitalist system. Campbell was arrested for incitement to mutiny, but, on 6 August, after a hasty Cabinet discussion, the prosecution against him was withdrawn. In quick succession, the Labour government repeatedly exposed itself to the accusation of obeying the orders of the extreme left and of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), something which the CPGB was eager to confirm.[55]

Such pressure soon led to the government's downfall. On 8 October the Liberal Party joined the Conservatives and voted a motion of censure against the government, forcing it to call a new election. The Red Peril played a central role in the following three weeks of electoral campaign.[56] The election gave the intelligence agencies an opportunity to get rid of a government they viewed as unwilling to fight the communist threat with the necessary effectiveness.

On 9 October, the Foreign Office received a copy of a letter supposedly written by the president of the Cominterm Zinoviev in mid-September, in which he instructed the CPGB to create communist cells in the armed forces and to compel the Labour Party to ratify the Anglo-Russian treaty, just as it had done when the treaty was signed.[57] The letter was a political bombshell, and it was published just four days before the election. Although the publication of the letter did not cause Labour's electoral defeat, many at the time believed this to be the case. More importantly, the goal of those who leaked the letter was to remove the Labour government.[58]

The SIS station in Riga received the Zinoviev letter on 2 October, from a source in Moscow who had in turn allegedly received it from an agent with access to Zinoviev's files.[59] When it arrived in London a week later, SIS senior officer Desmond Morton circulated it to the Foreign Office and other departments, assuring that "the authenticity of the document is undoubted", despite having made no efforts to verify this. Only on 27 October, after the letter's publication, SIS telegraphed Riga for further information on its provenance and how it got hold of it.[60]

SIS's statement was not enough for the Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Eyre Crowe, who asked for further corroborative proofs on 10 October. The letter's content was not surprising as Zinoviev had been sending similar letters to other Communist parties in Europe. Yet Crowe had good reasons to ask for further confirmation: SIS stations had been taken in by anti-Bolshevik forgers repeatedly before, with embarrassing consequences for the government.[61] Morton provided a seemingly impeccable confirmation the next day. An agent of the Industrial Intelligence Bureau, the biggest right-wing private intelligence organization operating side by side with the official intelligence agencies, had infiltrated the CPGB central committee and reported that it had recently received and discussed a letter from Moscow whose content was strikingly similar to

Zinoviev's.[62] Morton was running the agent jointly with the Industrial Intelligence Bureau, despite the fact that SIS was not supposed to collect information at home. More troublingly, the agent's report made no mention of any letter from Moscow, merely stating that the CPGB had discussed how to promote a revolution.[63]

According to Morton himself, the agent elaborated on his report in a meeting on 10 October, providing details that fit nicely with the content of Zinoviev's letter. Even assuming that Morton was not lying about this meeting, it seems implausible that an experienced agent had left out of a report such an important detail as the reception of a directive from Moscow. Morton likely asked the agent loaded questions, meant to confirm the authenticity of the letter.[64] In late November he told MI5 that he and his colleagues at MI6 were "firmly convinced this actual thing is a forgery", but he refused to admit this in wider circles.[65] His behavior cannot be attributed to negligence and superficiality. Most likely, Morton viewed the letter as an opportunity to get rid of a government he deeply disliked.[66]

To ensure the letter's publication before the election, someone within the intelligence community leaked the letter to the Conservative central office and to the anti-Bolshevik *Daily Mail*. We do not know who exactly leaked the letter, and there were probably multiple, independent leaks. For instance, on 21 October, Major Alexander of MI5 informed SIS that it was about to circulate the letter to each of the Commanding General Offices of the military, and that the Admiralty was about to do the same. In circulating the letter so widely, MI5 had to know it would leak.[67] Both Major Alexander and the SIS Chief Sinclair[68] had previously informed of the letter's existence the former MI5 officer Donald Im Thurm, a fierce conservative who worked to ensure the letter's publication by contacting the Conservative Central Office.[69] After the letter's publication, Sinclair defended the authenticity of the letter using arguments that the official history of the Zinoviev letter describes as a mixture of half-truths, more or less plausible statements passed as certain and flat-out lies.[70]

The list of suspects for the leak is large indeed: many intelligence officers were Tory diehards with greatly exaggerated fears of the Labour government's susceptibility to Bolshevik pressure.[71] A prime suspect is Major Joseph Ball, also of MI5. He was in close contact with both Morton and with the Conservative Central Office, which later recruited him to run "a little intelligence service of our own".[72] In Christopher Andrew's words, Ball's "subsequent lack of scruples in using intelligence for party-political advantage while at Central Office in the later 1920s strongly suggests, but does not prove, that he was willing to do so during the election campaign of October 1924."[73] Another suspect is SIS senior officer and future chief Stewart Menzies who, according to Morton, later admitted of having sent the letter by post to the *Daily Mail*. [74] Morton himself is also a suspect, as is J. D. Gregory, a strong anti-Bolshevik responsible for Northeastern Europe at the Foreign Office, who may have sold the letter to escape a crushing financial situation.[75]

Regardless of exactly who played which role, it is undisputed that numerous British intelligence officers first confirmed the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter on bogus grounds and then contributed to leaking it to the press. Even those who most strongly argued for the letter's authenticity have now convinced themselves

that the letter was a forgery, as recently confirmed by the opening of the Soviet archives,[76] and the whole affair a conspiracy.[77] Still, whereas the Henry Wilson plot in 1920 was centralized and directed by the highest-ranking officers of the armed services and of most intelligence agencies, in the Zinoviev letter affair there does not seem to have been a similar degree of coordination and centralization, and the main role was played by officers who were further down the hierarchy. In Gill Bennett's words,

> the idea of an institutionalized international campaign, directed by SIS, to discredit both the Bolsheviks and the Labour government is not only unsubstantiated by the documentation, but seems inherently unlikely. It was just not how the intelligence services operated, and implied a degree of cohesion and control, not to mention political will, which simply did not exist.[78]

SIS may not have directed the conspiracy, yet, given its Chief's role first in informing Im Thurm of the existence of the letter and then in defending the letter's authenticity using specious arguments, the institution as a whole was involved. However, the same cannot be said of MI5, whose leadership does not seem to have been involved. Even though MI5 as a whole did not act subversively, many of its officers did. Their motivation is clear. In the official history of MI5, Christopher Andrew writes: "those who conspired in October 1924 convinced themselves that they were acting in the national interest – to remove from power a government whose susceptibility to Soviet and pro-Soviet pressure made it a threat to national security."[79] An upcoming close election gave them the opportunity to do just that.

Conclusion

Subversion paradox theory explains well the history of British intelligence from 1909 to 1924. From its creation in 1909 to the first three years of the First World War, the Secret Service Bureau resembled the ideal type of a non-political intelligence agency. There was a sharp dividing line between domestic and foreign intelligence and, even though the idea of intelligence's political neutrality was not explicitly discussed, there is no evidence that intelligence ever engaged in political activities. The change in intelligence's main enemy from Germany to Bolshevism led to a shift in the direction of a political intelligence community. Thomson's DIHO was not politically neutral, as Thomson himself was aware, and it operated abroad as well as at home. Once DIHO was eliminated, MI5 and SIS took over the responsibility to fight against leftist subversion, and they also became more political. These political intelligence agencies soon proved harder to control, engaging in subversion in 1920 and 1924. In both cases they did so because they perceived the government as perilously soft on communism, if not altogether complicit with it. In 1920, Henry Wilson and several intelligence chiefs attempted to subvert by exploiting the fractures amongst their principals. Ultimately, the lack of support within the Cabinet caused the failure of their subversive plot. In 1924, SIS and parts of MI5 used an upcoming close election to remove a Labour government they viewed as a security threat.

Alternative explanations are not as convincing. A first alternative explanation is based on bureaucratic grievances. In both 1920 and 1924 British intelligence agencies had strong reasons to feel aggrieved with the government. The intelligence budget had been drastically cut in 1919 and 1920. In 1924 intelligence officers feared that, if re-elected, the Labour Party would have acted against the secret service's best interest, if not altogether abolished it.[80] It may very well be that these bureaucratic grievances strengthened intelligence officers' resolve to subvert, but the little direct evidence that we have on their motivations does not show this. In their private writings and discussions, the 1920 plotters discussed the government's attitude and its perceived treachery, not the threat to their budget or bureaucratic standing. To the contrary, many intelligence chiefs were willing to compromise their sources, diminishing the efficacy of their agencies and, in the long run, their bureaucratic standing, in order to expose the misdeeds of the Russian trade delegation and remove Lloyd George's government.

Second, contrary to the coup-proofing hypothesis, the presence of multiple intelligence agencies did not prevent them from subverting. In 1920 the agencies were able to coalesce in a broad coalition against Lloyd George. In 1924, both SIS and numerous MI5 officers plotted against the Labour government, although they probably did not coordinate their efforts.

Lastly, economic factors are at best a partial explanation of the subversive episodes of 1920 and 1924. The post-war demobilization caused a steep recession, but Britain remained one of the richest countries in the world at the time and thus an unlikely candidate for subversion. Furthermore, by 1924 the British economy was growing at a nearly 5% rate, accompanied by a significant reduction in unemployment, but this did not prevent subversion from reoccurring.[81]

Notes

1 Jeffery (2010), pp. 441–447.
2 Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 417–418. See also Rudgers (2000), p. 9.
3 The sub-committee of the CID was chaired by Secretary of State for War Viscount Haldane, and it included, among others, senior members of the armed forces, the permanent under-secretaries of the Treasury and of the Foreign Office and the Home Secretary. See CAB16/8, at the British National Archives in Kew (henceforth, BNA), Andrew (1987), p. 53, and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 25–26.
4 "Reports and Proceedings of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence appointed to consider the question of foreign espionage in the United Kingdom, 1909", in CAB16/8, BNA.
5 Ibidem. See also Andrew (1987), p. 58, and Jeffery (2010), p. 6.
6 The literature is unanimous on this point: Andrew (1987) p. 58, Andrew (2009) Section A, Jeffery (2010), pp. 3 and 12, Aldrich and Cormac (2017) pp. 23–28, Madeira (2003), p. 3, Judd (1999), p. 61, Deacon (1991), ch. 14 and Hennessy and Thomas (2009), pp. 19–21.
7 "Reduction of Estimates for Secret Services. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War", 19 March 1920, KV4/151.
8 See CAB16/8: "it was represented to the Sub-Committee that our organization for acquiring information of what is taking place in foreign ports and dockyards is defective, and that this is particularly the case with regard to Germany". See also CAB16/232 and Judd (1999), p. 70, who cites a note written in May 1907 by Colonel Count Gleichen of the War Office stating that "as it at present stands, we have no Secret Service agents whatever in Europe".

9 Andrew (2009) pp. 51–2 and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 28.
10 See the "Memorandum re Formation S.S. Bureau", August 1909, KV1/3.
11 Cited in Jeffery (2010), p. 13.
12 See KV1/3, as well as Andrew (1987), p. 59.
13 A brief description of the organizational set up of the secret services is in the "Report of the Secret Service Committee", February 1919, KV4/151, paragraph 4.
14 There is a consensus in the literature on this point. See for instance Andrew (1987), p. 59, West (1983), p. 4, and Hennessy and Thomas (2009), p. 20.
15 There is a consensus in the literature on this point. See Madeira (2003), p. 3, and (2014), Kindle Location 692 and 2219, Jeffery (2010), ch. 6 "From Boche to Bolshevism", and Andrew (2009), pp. 94–5.
16 Andrew (1987), pp. 229–230 and Madeira (2014), ch. 1.
17 Andrew (1987), p. 230.
18 Andrew (1987), p. 230.
19 Cited in Andrew (1987), p. 231. The same reasoning was repeated in a note from Long to Curzon on 8 February 1919 in KV4/151. Long wrote that "a capital sum should be placed at the disposal of the new (Secret Service) department – the interest to be available for the Secret Service. The open and avowed object of this last proposal is to avoid Parliamentary discussion."
20 See the minutes of the three meetings of the SSC on 3 February, 7 February and 4 April, in KV4/151. See also Madeira (2014), Kindle location 938–967, 992–1028.
21 Reorganisation of Intelligence (Circulated by the Home Secretary), 31 March 1919, KV4/151.
22 See the Reorganisation of Intelligence (Circulated by the Home Secretary), 31 March 1919, KV4/151 and Madeira (2014), p. 26.
23 Cited in Jeffery (2010), p. 143. No reference is cited for the original document, possibly because Jeffery had exclusive access to it.
24 Cited in Jeffery (2010), pp. 147–148.
25 From Henry Wilson's diary, 23 July 1920, now at the Imperial War Museum in London. See also Ullman (1972), p. 275.
26 Cited in Ullman (1972), p. 467.
27 Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 37–39, Crosby (2014), Andrew (1987), p. 244, and Madeira (2014), Kindle location 2059. Basil Thomson is explicitly mentioned as holding this belief.
28 What follows is based on Henry Wilson's diary, now at the Imperial War Museum in London. See also Ullman (1972), pp. 275–283, and Crosby (2014), Kindle location 7211–7350.
29 Wilson's diary entries for 27 May and 23 July and Ullman (1972), p. 275.
30 Andrew (1987), p. 245 and p. 262, Madeira (2014), Kindle location 2059–2073, Quinlan (2014), ch. 1, especially pp. 18–20, and Crosby (2014), Kindle location 7429.
31 In an official response to the Soviet government on 30 June 1920, the British government restated that trade negotiations could continue under the condition that "each party refrains from hostile action or undertakings against the other and from conducting any official propaganda direct or indirect against the institutions of the other party". Now in the UK Parliamentary Archives, Davidson Files.
32 Directorate of Intelligence (Home Office), "Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom", Report No.67, August 26, 1920, CAB24/111.
33 Wilson's diary, 18 August. My emphasis. See also Ullman (1972), pp. 266 and 277–278, Crosby (2014), Kindle location 7413–7420 and Wilson's diary entry on 24 August, where Thomson's belief is restated. It could be that Wilson was engaging in a form of mirror imaging, assuming that others saw Lloyd George the way he did. Yet Thomson's behavior throughout the crisis and his reaction when Lloyd George forced him to resign, indicate that he really believed that Lloyd George was a traitor.
34 Wilson's diary entry, 18 August 1920. See also Ullman (1972), p. 278, and Crosby (2014), Kindle location 7429–7444.

35 Letter from Wilson to Churchill on August 18, 1920, cited in Ullman (1972), p. 279, and in Andrew (1987), pp. 266–267.
36 Wilson's diary, 19 August.
37 See Wilson's diary, 24 August, where he adds: "Trenchard with whom I discussed this matter lately and to whom I showed the 2 notes + the intercepts thinks, like Basil Thomson, that LG is a traitor." Crosby (2014), Kindle location 7436, adds the Second Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Montague Browning, and the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sir Osmond de B. Brock, to the list of Wilson's supporters.
38 The lack of evidence of SIS and MI5's involvement was personally confirmed to me by the late Keith Jeffery, Wilson's biographer and SIS' official historian.
39 See Wilson's diary entry for 24 August and Ullman (1972), p. 281.
40 The memorandum by Thomson, Wilson and Sinclair is now among the Davidson papers at the UK Parliamentary Archives. See also Ullman (1972), pp. 266, 287–289, and Andrew (1977), p. 686. In a memorandum on 9 September, also among the Davidson papers, Sinclair went as far to say that "even if the publication of the telegrams was to result in not another message being decoded, then the present situation would fully justify it".
41 Ullman (1972), p. 307.
42 Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 39 mention Basil Thomson as the main suspect.
43 Andrew (1987), p. 270, and Madeira (2014), Kindle location 2086–2099.
44 Report of the Committee appointed by the Cabinet on 22 March, KV5/151, p. 1.
45 Ibidem, p. 14
46 See the committee's records in KV5/151, BNA. For a more extensive discussion of Thomson's and DIHO's politicization of reports on Bolshevik subversion, see Madeira (2014), Kindle locations 861–875 and 2485–2516.
47 Draft minutes of the 1st meeting of the Secret Service Committee, 15 November 1921, KV4/151.
48 See Mansfield-Cumming's remarks, cited in Jeffery (2010), pp. 147–148.
49 Sinclair became SIS director following Cumming's death in 1923. He was also named non-operational director of the Government Code & Cypher School (GC&CS), Britain's signals intelligence agency. See Jeffery (2010), p. 170 and p. 209.
50 Jeffery (2010), p. 214.
51 The literature is unanimous on this point. See Andrew (2009), p. 146, Bennett (2007), p. 79, 127 and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 45–47.
52 Andrew (1977), p. 699, and (1987), pp. 299–300, and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 47.
53 Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 46 and Andrew (1987), pp. 298–299.
54 Andrew (1987), p. 303.
55 See the official history of the episode by Bennett (1999), pp. 7–11, and Andrew (1977), p. 700.
56 Bennett (1999), pp. 8–11, and Andrew (1987), pp. 302–303.
57 The full text of the letter is reproduced in Bennett (1999), pp. 93–5.
58 There is wide agreement on this point. See, among others, Andrew (1987) p. 308, Jeffery (2010), p. 216, Bennett (1999), p. 92, Madeira (2014), Kindle location 3223–3234, and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 49.
59 This account is based on Bennett (1999), ch. 2, Jeffery (2010), pp. 214–222, Andrew (1987), pp. 304–313, Andrew (2009), pp. 148–150, and Quinlan (2014), pp. 31–32. The account in Chester, Fay and Young (1967) is now believed to be incorrect in several ways, although their main assertion, that the letter was a forgery, has become the consensus.
60 Bennett (1999), p. 35, and Jeffery (2010), p. 218.
61 For instance, in 1921 Curzon sent a note to Moscow based on information obtained by the SIS station in Berlin protesting Soviet subversion in India, but the information turned out to be a forgery; see Andrew (1987), p. 280. In 1921 the information provided by the SIS station in Reval on Soviet support for Sinn Fein also turned out to be a forgery, despite SIS's assurance that the source's "reliability has been proved on many occasions"; see Andrew (2009), p. 145.

62 Interestingly, SIS was thus running agents within Britain, without the knowledge of MI5 or Special Branch, and it was doing so with an organization that was clearly political and right-wing. See Bennett (1999), p. 38.
63 See Jeffery (2010), p. 218, Bennett (1999), pp. 36–37, and Andrew (2009), p. 149, who defines Morton's behavior as outrageous.
64 Bennett (1999), p. 37.
65 Cited in Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 50.
66 Morton's biographer and the official historian of the Zinoviev letter reaches the same judgment. See Bennett (2007), pp. 79–85.
67 At least in the judgment of the Zinoviev letter's official historian, Bennett (1999), p. 44. See also Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 51.
68 Bennett (1999), p. 45, note 34.
69 Bennett (1999), p. 45
70 Bennett (1999), pp. 81–83. See also Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 50–51.
71 See also Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 50–51, and Andrew (1987), pp. 307–308. Andrew adds that "they also had a far more rational fear for the future of the intelligence services following a Labour victory. In 1925 the Labour Party advisory committee on international questions was actually to propose the suspension of the secret service and the revelation of its activities."
72 See Andrew (2009), p. 126, and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), pp. 10, 74–75, 80–81, on Ball's subsequent career and Bennett (1999), p. 31, on the close connection between Morton and Ball.
73 Andrew (2009), p. 150.
74 Bennett (1999), pp. 45–46, Jeffery (2010), pp. 221–222, and Aldrich and Cormac (2017), p. 51. Jeffery adds that Morton's assertion, made in 1969, was greeted with "amazement and disbelief" within SIS.
75 Gregory's case is discussed thoroughly in Bennett (1999), pp. 56–65.
76 In November 1924 Soviet military intelligence established that the Zinoviev letter had been produced by a forger named Pokrowski, who then sold it to the SIS head of station in Riga. See Haslam (2014), pp. 18–19, who references an official collection of Politburo documents.
77 On this point compare Andrew (1977) with Andrew (2009).
78 Bennett (1999), p. 92.
79 Andrew (2009), p. 150.
80 Andrew (1987), pp. 307–308.
81 See the Data Annex of Hills, Sally Ryland Thomas and Nicholas Dimsdale, "The UK recession in context: What do three centuries of data tell us?", *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*, Q4, 2010.

4

THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, 1908–1948

From a law enforcement bureau to a political intelligence agency

Introduction

Throughout his forty-eight years as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover carefully cultivated the FBI's image as a professional and politically neutral agency. Hoover's death in May 1972 spared him from seeing the collapse of his Bureau's image. The post-Watergate Congressional investigations revealed that the FBI had been something very different: a political agency, poorly controlled by its principals, with a director whose obsession had long been the fight against American communists.

The Bureau of Investigation was not created to be an intelligence agency, much less a political intelligence agency. It was meant to be a law enforcement agency, one strictly dedicated to the prosecution of violations of federal statutes. The Bureau never abandoned its law enforcement role, but soon started gathering intelligence for purposes other than prosecution. Law enforcement and intelligence gathering have coexisted uneasily throughout the history of the Bureau, but the focus here is on the intelligence dimension.

This chapter explains why a law enforcement agency became a political intelligence agency. I follow the evolution of the Bureau of Investigation from its establishment in 1908 to its attempt to push President Truman out of office in the 1948 elections. I argue that after 1917 fighting communists and other left-wing radicals became a priority for the Bureau, at a time when America faced a plausible subversive threat. The Bureau's long-time director, J. Edgar Hoover, continued to believe that communists posed a significant threat for the rest of his life, and he shaped the FBI accordingly.

With the partial exception of his first twelve years as director, from 1924 to 1936, Hoover's FBI resembled the ideal type of political intelligence agency: it was not politically neutral and it tried, with some success, to operate both at home and

abroad. Its principals, the Attorney General and the president, exercised a weak control over its operations. In 1948 it engaged in subversion when it tried to cause Truman's electoral defeat.

This chapter is divided into five parts and the division follows the changes in the Bureau's priorities, as they either included or excluded a strong subversive threat. The first part studies the establishment of the Bureau of Investigation and its evolution until 1917, showing how it resembled a non-political intelligence agency. The second part analyzes the years from 1917 to 1924, when the Bureau first fought against what was perceived as a strong subversive threat, transforming itself into a political agency. The third part begins in 1924, when Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone tried (with partial success) to depoliticize the Bureau and limit it to a law enforcement role, and ends in 1936, when Franklin Roosevelt asked Hoover to investigate subversive activities in America. The fourth part studies the FBI from 1936 to its attempt to remove Truman from office in the 1948 elections. It shows that Roosevelt's instructions led to a re-politicization of the Bureau, reducing policymakers' control even before the subversive attempt against Truman. The fifth part concludes by assessing how well subversion paradox theory and its alternatives explained the FBI's history and its subversive attempt in 1948.

1908–1917: the establishment and early years of the Bureau

Until the summer of 1908, the Department of Justice had no permanent investigative force of its own. It had previously relied on private detectives and by 1908 it was constantly loaning Secret Service agents from the Treasury Department.[1] In 1907 and early 1908 Attorney General Charles Bonaparte repeatedly asked Congress to fund a permanent investigative force for his department.[2] Lawmakers initially rebuked Bonaparte's attempts. They opposed a further expansion of federal powers in the field of law enforcement and, according to President Theodore Roosevelt, some of them were concerned about being targeted by an investigative force that would have focused on corruption.[3] The Attorney General decided to go ahead with his original plan anyway, waiting for Congress to be in recess before issuing the founding order for a permanent investigative force on 26 July 1908.[4]

Bonaparte still needed Congressional approval to ensure the long-term survivability of his investigative force. To obtain this approval, the Attorney General had to reassure Congress on several points. The Bureau would not be a secret police, it would not be used for "political purposes", its agents could not make arrests nor carry firearms, its funds would only be used for the detection and prosecution of federal crimes and its agents would have been under the firm control of the Attorney General, who "knows or ought to know at all times, what they are doing and at what cost."[5]

At last, Bonaparte's persuasive efforts were successful. Congress gave the Bureau its seal of approval and left the door open for its further expansion by refusing to enact legislation defining the scope of the Bureau's investigations. Such legislative micromanagement, Bonaparte advised, would have undermined sound administration.[6]

The Bureau of Investigation was established as an investigative agency, not an intelligence one. The information it gathered was meant to be used solely for the prosecution of federal crimes. Its initial investigative priorities were the fight against land frauds and prostitution.[7] The Bureau acquired a large amount of potentially compromising information in its fight against prostitution, but there is no evidence that this information was ever used as a source of blackmail or that it ever acted against the wishes of its principals, the president and the Attorney General. At this time, the Bureau was indeed a professional investigative force, in line with Bonaparte's reassurances to Congress.[8]

Congress itself, generally under pressure from the executive, progressively lifted the restrictions on the Bureau's operations, allowing it to perform intelligence tasks. In 1910 lawmakers permitted the use of appropriated funds "for such other investigations regarding official matters under the control of the Department of Justice as may be directed by the Attorney General."[9] With the outbreak of World War I in Europe, the fear of British and especially German espionage put pressure on the Bureau to expand the scope of its operations. Attorney General Thomas Watt Gregory initially argued against an expansive approach to counterintelligence, stating that the Bureau only investigated violations of federal law, asking Congress to expand the federal crimes the Bureau could prosecute.[10] After a series of suspected German sabotages, in 1916 Congress granted funds for Bureau investigations of foreign-directed activities, when requested by the State Department. The Bureau was thus given the power to perform intelligence tasks, unrelated to law enforcement.[11]

1917–1924: a political intelligence agency

In 1917 the Bureau began to fight against a plausible subversive threat, leading to its transformation into a political intelligence agency. After the declaration of war against the Central Powers in April, Congress approved a series of bills that further expanded the scope of the Bureau's operations, even though their duration was generally limited to wartime. The Bureau was tasked with enforcing the military draft, identifying and prosecuting spies and deporting alien anarchists and subversives in general.[12] The Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917 further alarmed American elites and public opinion, leading to an intensification of the Bureau's anti-subversive activities. Radicals and subversives thus became the Bureau's main target.[13] By the end of the war, more than half of the Bureau's investigations concerned cases of political dissent.[14]

The threat posed by leftist subversives was widely perceived as severe, both during and even more after the war. It was more than plausible to think that America could become fertile ground for a revolution.[15] The Wilson administration feared that domestic opposition could undermine its foreign policy goals, and was particularly concerned with the threat posed by waves of immigrants holding subversive beliefs.[16] In Wilson's words, "the poison of disorder, the poison of revolt, the poison of chaos" were coming to America and terrorists and anarchists posed "the gravest threats against our national peace and safety."[17] In January 1919, Senate hearings on the communist

threat conveyed the message that communists were trying to overthrow the US government and that they posed "the gravest menace to this country today".[18] When the country was hit by a wave of strikes in 1919, many corporate executives, newspaper editors and national leaders portrayed it as the prologue to a violent revolution.[19] Further alarming public opinion, the wave of strikes was followed by a wave of bombings. In late April, anarchists sent thirty-six mail-bombs to prominent figures in the country. On 2 June, nine bombs went off in seven cities, including one that exploded on the doorsteps of the recently nominated Attorney General, Mitchell Palmer.[20] Three months later, at least five government informers reported on the establishment of the American Communist Party. The Party wanted to be "an exact copy of the Russian original" and its goal was to bring Bolshevism to the biggest capitalist country in the world. A young but high-ranking Bureau official, J. Edgar Hoover, told Congress that the country faced an insurrection unlike any since the Civil War. Communists were controlled by Moscow and their single aim was "to overthrow the Government of the United States by force and violence".[21]

The fight against this new subversive enemy rapidly transformed the Bureau of Investigation in the direction of a political intelligence agency[22]: not politically neutral and covering both foreign and domestic activities. By late 1919, the Bureau's newly established Radical division, led by Hoover, had infiltrated several radical groups and amassed thousands of files on their members. Little of this information would have been useful for prosecution, but the Bureau's main goal was political containment, not law enforcement.[23]

The pressure to conduct operations against the radicals mounted rapidly. In October 1919, the Senate passed a resolution asking Attorney General Palmer what he had done to fight the forces trying to overthrow the government. Palmer turned to Hoover, who three weeks later directed a raid on the Union of Russian Workers, an anarchist group of about 4,000 Russian immigrants.[24] Of the 1,200 persons seized that night, fewer than two hundred were found to be alien subversives worthy of deportation. Much of the press hailed the raid as a success and Hoover further amplified the enthusiasm by passing to trusted journalists numerous documents seized by the Bureau.[25]

Months later, Hoover used the Bureau's moles in the Communist and the Communist Labor parties to organize meetings of both parties across the country on 2 January 1920. Bureau agents raided these meetings and arrested almost ten thousand people. These raids are now known as the Palmer Raids, but it was Hoover who organized and directed them.[26]

The initial reaction of the public was euphoric, but critics soon argued that the Department of Justice was acting illegally and unconstitutionally and seeking verdicts based on guilt by association.[27] Most prominently, Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis Post applied a strict interpretation of the Immigration Law to release all but a few hundred of those arrested by the Bureau.[28]

The Bureau reacted by extending the surveillance techniques first developed against subversives to its critics and to other political figures who had nothing to do with subversive groups. On 15 January, Hoover asked all his field offices "for information

linking Post to the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World]".[29] He then compiled a dossier on Post's political associations with leftists and passed it on to friendly congressmen, who opened up an investigation to impeach him. Attorney General Palmer took Hoover's case to the White House. In a Cabinet meeting in April with an ailing President Wilson, who had never fully recovered from a stroke he suffered in October 1919, Palmer argued that the country faced the threat of revolution and demanded that Post be fired. Wilson reportedly "told Palmer not to let the country see red", but Palmer chose to go ahead in his anti-Communist campaign anyway.[30] In front of the House Rules Committee conducting the investigation, Palmer stated that Post's actions had aided and abetted Bolshevism. Post successfully rebutted Palmer's charges, arguing case by case that the Department of Justice had wrongfully arrested thousands of individuals.[31] The House Rules Committee ended up criticizing the original accuser, leading to the political defeat of Palmer's and Hoover's anti-communist campaign.

This defeat did not halt the Bureau's transformation into a political intelligence agency. The Bureau continued the practice of politically motivated investigations. For instance, the House Rules Committee Chairman, congressman Philip Campbell,[32] became the first of many members of Congress to be investigated by the Bureau for having criticized it. In October 1920 Hoover decided to restructure the Radical Division, blurring the divide between domestic and foreign intelligence. He renamed it the General Intelligence Division, arguing that he now wanted to cover "not only the radical activities in the United States", but those "of an international nature as well". He claimed a mandate that went beyond mere radical politics, to include "economic and industrial disturbances".[33] The transformation into a political intelligence agency was now complete.

The political uses of the Bureau intensified after the election of William Harding as president in 1920 and the appointment of Harry Daugherty as Attorney General. Daugherty was a fierce anti-communist, who told the president that the country was threatened with civil war. To deal with this threat he nominated as Bureau director a fellow anti-communist and former head of the Secret Service, William Burns. Burns believed that the Bureau's mission was to "drive every radical out of the country and bring the parlor Bolsheviks to their senses".[34]

Burns' Bureau began hiring agents based on their partisan Republican loyalty and investigated at least five members of Congress who had criticized Harding and his Attorney General. It broke into their offices and homes, intercepted their mail and wiretapped their phones.[35] The most targeted member of Congress was a newly elected Democratic senator from Montana, Burton Wheeler. In 1924 Wheeler led the hearings that became part of the Teapot Dome scandal, an investigation into the leases of oil fields by the Secretary of the Interior, uncovering corrupt deals and an attempted cover up by the Department of Justice. Soon afterwards, the Bureau began to investigate Wheeler, even fabricating evidence against him.[36] The Bureau's interest in Wheeler became even stronger as he took a leading role in the movement in favor of granting diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. Attorney General Daugherty directed the Bureau against the senators favoring recognition and accused Wheeler of being "the communist leader in

the Senate" and "no more a Democrat than Stalin". The Bureau's recently nominated second-in-command, Edgar Hoover, leaked documents to trusted politicians and anti-communist campaigners, ultimately leading to the defeat of the movement favoring diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. In Tim Weiner's words, the Bureau "was turning into an illegal weapon of political warfare".[37]

Under Attorney General Daugherty and Director Burns, the Bureau thus aligned itself with the Republican Party. Yet it was not Daugherty's and Burns' desire to use the Bureau as an instrument of the partisan struggle that first politicized the Bureau. As we have seen, the Bureau transformed itself into a political intelligence agency under President Wilson, a Democrat, after the fight against leftist subversives became one of its main priorities. Furthermore, as we will see, it was under a Republican president that the Bureau was prohibited from fighting subversion and partially depoliticized. Not partisan loyalty, but the priorities of the Bureau caused its shifts between non-political and political intelligence.

Despite its political character, there is little strong evidence that the Bureau was weakly controlled by its principals. Harlan Stone, who became Attorney General in 1924 after Harding's death and Daugherty's resignation, described the Bureau he found when he came into office as being "lawless, maintaining many activities which were without authority in federal statutes, and engaging in many practices which are brutal and tyrannical in the extreme".[38] It is likely that Harding and Attorney General Daugherty had not authorized some of these activities, yet they never stated that their control was weak. Further, they were all fiercely anti-communist and sufficiently unscrupulous to condone and order many of these activities.

The strongest evidence of a lack of control comes instead from the period after 1924, when the Bureau found itself working under directives which limited its capacity to monitor and fight subversives. When the Bureau faced an Attorney General who did not want it to continue its fight against subversion, it began engaging in unauthorized activities and deceiving its principals. The Bureau thus followed its principals as long as they shared its anti-communist preferences, placing few restrictions on its operations. Principals' strong control lasted only as long as preferences converged.

1924–1936: attempted depoliticization and its limits

Stone's reform and its limits: assessing the strength of principals' control

It took a major scandal for the president and the Attorney General to try to rein in the Bureau and change its priorities, halting but not fully reversing its shift towards a political intelligence agency.

The Senate's investigation into the oil lease scandal uncovered evidence of bribes paid to the Secretary of the Interior and to Attorney General Daugherty. It also discovered that the Bureau had been looking for damaging information on the senators conducting the investigation, and that it had used aggressive and unorthodox means to do so. Senator Wheeler caused a stir when he announced that he

and other senators had been targeted by the Bureau, leading the Senate to decide to investigate the Department of Justice in March 1924. President Calvin Coolidge, who had succeeded Harding after his death in August 1923, decided to fire Attorney General Daugherty and to replace him with Harlan Fiske Stone, a highly respected legal scholar who had been a strong critic of the 1920 raids.[39]

Attorney General Stone argued that he wanted an investigative force that was law-abiding, not involved in politics and limited to the prosecution of federal crimes.[40] He immediately fired the Bureau's director William Burns, dissolved the General Intelligence Division and prohibited wiretapping. Stone then asked Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover for advice on who to choose as the new director, and Herbert Hoover recommended the Bureau's second in command, his unrelated namesake Edgar Hoover. The day after Burns was fired, Stone summoned Edgar Hoover to his office and offered him to become the Bureau's acting director. Sensing the changed political climate, Hoover replied that he accepted the offer, but on one condition: "the Bureau must be divorced from politics and not be a catch-all for political hacks".[41] The Attorney General believed he had found the right man for the job.

Stone was thus trying to transform the Bureau into what it was originally designed to be, an apolitical law enforcement agency. By doing so, he was also trying to modify the Bureau's priorities. Given the expiration of most war-time statutes, Stone's guidelines meant that fighting subversion should have stopped being a priority for the Bureau. Hoover was not willing to abandon the fight against subversion, yet he knew that in order to be confirmed as permanent director he had to convince Stone that he was faithfully executing his directives. He thus reduced the Bureau's political and anti-subversive activities to the point where they could be hidden from the Attorney General, while implementing the most visible points of Stone's strategy.[42]

Hoover strove to create an image of the Bureau as a professional, apolitical and effective crime-fighting institution, exactly what Stone wanted it to be. He instituted a new, strict standard of conduct for his agents. He got rid of the many political appointees who had been working for the Bureau during the Harding administration, hiring men of proven abilities with legal training instead. He reassured senators that he was curtailing the scope of the Bureau's investigations to violations of federal statutes.[43]

Hoover understood the value of the Bureau's image as a politically neutral law-enforcement agency. With Democrats and Republicans sharing and alternating themselves in power, Hoover would not have survived for long as director had he and his Bureau been perceived as an overly partisan political police. Hoover walked a fine line, pursuing the conflicting goals of fighting subversives and of appearing politically neutral in order to preserve the Bureau's bureaucratic standing. In public, he opposed the expansion of the Bureau's jurisdiction beyond law enforcement, even sacrificing the opportunity to intensify the fight against subversion. Behind closed doors, he developed an elaborate filing and reporting system, meant to ensure that his unauthorized anti-subversive activities remained secret.

When a citizen would volunteer information on subversive activities and ask the Bureau to investigate, Hoover would duly inform the Attorney General that he had no power to do so.[44] In 1930, Hoover argued in front of Congress against a bill which would have required the Bureau "to investigate communist and revolutionary activity". If Congress did not make communist activities illegal, Hoover said, the Bureau would have merely acquired "a mass of material with which nothing could be done". Yet Hoover was collecting such material and was using it in the diminished but continuing fight against leftist subversion. More plausibly, he was concerned that a Congressional authorization of political surveillance would have led to allegations that the Bureau was a political police, impairing its effectiveness.[45] Hoover may have also preferred to continue to operate in secrecy, without the limitations and the publicity imposed by a Congressional bill.[46]

Hoover sought to preserve an opening for the monitoring of subversive activities. The clearest example is a letter he wrote to the Assistant Attorney General and future head of the Office of Strategic Services, William Donovan, in October 1924. Hoover argued that "the activities of the Communists and other ultra-radicals have not up to the present time constituted a violation of the federal statutes, and consequently, the Department of Justice, theoretically, has no right to investigate such activities", but then suggested that continued investigation of such people might be in order, because at some future time they might be guilty of violating federal laws.[47] What was phrased as a mere suggestion became a recurrent practice. The Bureau continued to infiltrate and investigate radical and even liberal groups, albeit more discreetly and using less aggressive tactics than before. The Bureau had an informer on the board of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) throughout the second half of the 1920s and monitored the ACLU's offices from New York to Los Angeles. It monitored radical labor organizations such as the Trade Union Educational League and the Industrial Workers of the World and single-issue groups such as the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. Using paid informers and the information gathered by local police units, it wrote a monthly report on radical activities for internal use.[48]

Scholars dismiss as unlikely that Hoover received a verbal authorization to continue investigating "Communists and other ultra-radicals".[49] This would have negated the whole point of Stone's reform, and Stone himself was convinced that the Bureau had really confined itself to the investigation of violations federal statutes.[50] Furthermore, as I will show, Hoover devised a sophisticated filing system to ensure that the Bureau's political surveillance would not be uncovered, keeping important elements of it unknown to the Attorney General himself. Had the Attorney General tacitly agreed to the continuation of political surveillance, there would have been no need to keep it secret from him.

Stone thus only managed to scale back the Bureau's political surveillance, but unbeknown to him surveillance continued. Stone accepted Hoover's reassurances that the Bureau was no longer monitoring political activities, but, as a later Attorney General remarked, he was aware of only about 10% of what the Bureau was doing.[51] Stone may have simply been naïve in accepting Hoover's reassurances on

faith or, given that he was nominated Supreme Court justice after roughly a year as Attorney General, he may not have had the time to check what Hoover was doing. Perhaps more importantly, Stone faced an acting director who believed that communists and other subversives posed an existential threat to America and who had no reluctance to engage in politics. Hoover was willing to mislead his principals and to hide his activities from them in order to continue to fight leftist subversion, significantly weakening the principals' capacity to control the Bureau.[52]

Having convinced Stone that he was faithfully executing his directives, Hoover obtained the appointment as permanent director in December 1924. He immediately began to create a complex system of filing and reporting that eschewed the Attorney General's control and minimized the chances of discovery of the Bureau's unauthorized activities. One of the first steps taken by Stone was, as we have seen, the dismantlement of the General Intelligence Division. Even though the General Intelligence Division was formally abolished, its files, the core element of the Division's power, were never destroyed but transferred without the Attorney General's knowledge to a new record system called "Official and Confidential". Hoover kept these files under his control, describing them as "items believed inadvisable to be included in the general files of the Bureau".[53] Unlike the files in the central records system, Official and Confidential files could not be discovered by courts or subpoenaed by Congress because, despite their name, they were not official Bureau files and their existence was known to only a few people within the Bureau.[54] Hoover created other parallel filing systems, such as the "personal and confidential" letters via which his agents reported on "subversive activities" and the "Obscene file" which contained sexually obscene and compromising material.[55]

The literature agrees that Stone's successors as Attorney General were not more successful in controlling the Bureau. John Sargent, Attorney General for the remainder of the Coolidge administration, was reportedly even less aware than Stone of what the Bureau was doing.[56] He and his successor, William Mitchell, Attorney General during Herbert Hoover's presidency, never manifested any desire to resurrect the Bureau's Radical Division. President Hoover seemed instead content with relying on the Bureau for occasional political services, without asking too many questions about the Bureau's other activities.[57]

The Bureau's half step towards a non-political intelligence agency

Even though Stone's attempt to reprioritize and depoliticize it fell short in several respects, from 1924 to 1936 the Bureau became less political and more focused on law-enforcement than on intelligence gathering.

The Bureau continued to engage in political surveillance, but less so than in the past and using more discrete and less disruptive methods.[58] There is no evidence that the Bureau's attempts to monitor members of Congress continued, even though Congress was never informed of the Bureau's political activities.

The Bureau conducted political services for incumbent administrations, especially under Herbert Hoover. The Bureau forwarded information to the White

House on the president's critics and at times intimidated them.[59] Under the White House's directions, the Bureau launched investigations with no law-enforcement purpose on critics like the ACLU, the liberal Foreign Policy Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Navy League, the right-wing Sentinels of the Republic and, most prominently, the so-called Bonus Army, a group of World War I veterans who embarrassed the president with their headline-grabbing protest in favor of a bonus for their service.[60]

The Bureau continued to conduct political services during the first years of the Roosevelt Administration, investigating strikes and, once again, the ACLU.[61] Still, these political services were occasional, and the Bureau focused primarily on crime throughout this period.[62] The apparent inability of the local police to contain the rise in crime which followed Prohibition and the Great Depression had led to a demand for an increased federal role in law enforcement. Congress introduced numerous new kinds of federal crimes, expanding the Bureau's jurisdiction to include bank robberies, interstate racketeering and most cases of kidnapping. The Bureau's highly publicized successes in the fight against gangsters and bank-robbers shaped and popularized the carefully cultivated image of the Bureau as an efficient and apolitical law enforcement agency.[63]

The Bureau's international dimension was curtailed. Under Stone's directive, the Bureau could no longer justify surveillance of subversive activity abroad as it did not constitute a violation of federal laws. The Bureau still tried to continue monitoring radical American citizens travelling abroad, asking the State Department to do the job the Bureau could no longer do. The State Department monitored labor leaders, academics and critics of the Justice Department such as Felix Frankfurter. These requests could not be justified under existing laws, but the Bureau argued that an individual "who advocates Marxism-Leninism might just as well be working as an agent of a foreign power because he is aiding his cause."[64]

In 1936, this half step towards a non-political intelligence agency was reversed when President Roosevelt secretly assigned the Bureau the task of covering subversive activities.

1936–1948: political agency once again

Roosevelt's 1936 instructions and the renewed fight against subversion

In May 1934, President Roosevelt instructed the Bureau to gather intelligence on the Nazi movement in the US and on its possible connections with German officials. Roosevelt's military advisers had recommended an investigation on both the American Fascist and Communist movements, and their links to Germany and the USSR respectively, but Roosevelt decided to limit the investigation to the right end of the spectrum. Hoover promptly issued a directive to his agents describing the investigation "as a so-called intelligence investigation" with no law-enforcement purpose.[65]

Two years later, what had been an occasional demand for an intelligence investigation became the norm. On 24 August 1936, Roosevelt invited Hoover to the White House to discuss "the question of subversive activities in the United States, particularly Fascism and Communism." Hoover briefed the president only on communism, despite the president's 1934 demand to focus on fascism. He stated that communists were planning to use the unions and guilds they had infiltrated to control the shipping industry, the mining industry and the news media. "By doing so they would be able at any time to paralyze the country in that they could stop all shipping in and out (…); stop the operation of industry through the Mining Union (…); and stop publication of any newspapers of the country through the Newspaper Guild."[66]

Roosevelt "had been considerably concerned about the movements of the Communists and of Fascism in the United States" and was interested in "obtaining a broad picture of the general [communist] movement and its activities as may affect the economic and political life of the country as a whole". Hoover replied that there was "no governmental organization which is getting any so-called 'general intelligence information' upon this subject", but that the appropriation of the recently renamed Federal Bureau of Investigation allowed it to investigate "any matters referred to it by the Department of State".[67]

The next day, Roosevelt told Hoover and the Secretary of State Cordell Hull that he wanted a survey of communist and fascist activities in the country. Because "both of these movements were international in scope and (…) Communism particularly was directed from Moscow", the State Department could request an inquiry. Roosevelt added that Hull's request should not be made in writing, "since he desired the matter to be handled quite confidentially".[68] Nonetheless, Hoover wrote memoranda for himself on both meetings, in order to have a record showing that he had not taken the FBI down an unauthorized path.[69]

Roosevelt's instructions marked a turning point in the FBI's history. Hoover now had a secret, broadly worded presidential authorization to investigate subversive activities, with no immediate law enforcement purpose. Roosevelt thus made dead letter of Stone's directive, recognizing intelligence investigations into subversive activities as a proper activity for the Bureau. The Bureau had never stopped investigating leftist subversion and considering it a priority, but it was now free to intensify its anti-subversive efforts without having to hide them from its principals.

Rather than conducting one investigation, Hoover immediately ordered his senior aides to start building the infrastructure for an enlarged surveillance program, focusing on radicals and trade unions, which left few activities outside its scope.[70] The FBI focused on communism much more than fascism, despite the fact that since 1934 Roosevelt had given more emphasis to the fascist threat.[71] Hoover moved slowly and cautiously against the extreme right, to the point that Roosevelt himself complained in 1942 that the FBI "was spending too much time investigating suspected Communists in the Government and out, (…) and ignoring the Fascist minded groups both in the Government and out".[72]

Unlike Hoover, the president most likely did not perceive the subversive enemies as posing a plausible threat of overthrowing the government. In Theoharis and Cox's words, he "did not share the Director's obsession with the 'subversive' threat, especially that from the American leftists".[73] Yet his verbal, generic and open-ended instruction allowed Hoover to shape the authorization in the direction he preferred, moving again the FBI in the direction of a political intelligence agency.

The FBI's shift towards a political intelligence agency

Even before 1936 the FBI conducted political services for the White House, supplying it with information on the president's critics. These services intensified after 1936, and even more as World War II approached, turning Hoover into what historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones calls a "political spy for the President".[74] For instance, under Roosevelt's instructions the FBI sought to discredit prominent isolationists such as Charles Lindbergh, the aviation hero, and several members of Congress, such as Martin Dies, Hamilton Fish, Burton Wheeler and Gerald Nye.[75]

Roosevelt explicitly approved of the FBI's surveillance of some members of Congress, arguing that "there is absolutely no valid reason why any suspected subversive activities on their part should not be investigated".[76] Not all congressmen were monitored in pursuit of an order from the Roosevelt administration, however. The Bureau sent unsolicited reports to the White House on the alleged communist and leftist associations of senators Thomas, Pepper and Mead, and on congressman Marcantonio.[77] In other cases, the Bureau investigated congressmen without informing the White House.[78]

The transformation set in motion by Roosevelt's 1936 went beyond an intensification of political surveillance. Now authorized to conduct noncriminal intelligence investigations against subversives, the Bureau increasingly relied on intrusive and illegal investigative techniques, knowing that the information it uncovered did not have to withstand judicial scrutiny because it was generally not intended for prosecution. These investigations inevitably uncovered information on a target's political views and personal conduct. The information was rarely valuable for prosecution, but often so for dissemination to the White House or to sympathetic congressmen and journalists. In the process, the FBI's role of political containment extended beyond subversive activities, targeting presidential critics and, as I will show, in some occasions the president himself.[79]

Newly authorized to fight against subversives, the FBI soon began to operate both at home and abroad. It was the president who pushed the FBI to operate overseas. In June 1939 Roosevelt created an Interdepartmental Intelligence Committee (IIC), formed by the FBI, Army and Navy intelligence and a representative from the State Department. The armed services refused to allow their military attachés to get involved in espionage and covert action, thus the IIC decided to have the FBI take charge of covert operations in foreign countries. In June 1940 Roosevelt ordered to divide the foreign intelligence field. He stated that "the FBI should be responsible for foreign-intelligence work in the Western Hemisphere" while "the existing Military Intelligence and Naval Intelligence branches should cover the rest of the world".[80]

To take care of the unexpected responsibility for intelligence in the Western Hemisphere, the FBI established the Special Intelligence Service (SIS) on 1 July. Hoover was unenthusiastic about this expansion. Even though the emphasis of SIS's work was on Latin American subversive groups, he did not think that the FBI had the necessary experience and competence to operate abroad.[81] Between March 1941 and September 1942, Hoover repeatedly tried to divest the FBI of the SIS, arguing that he had "no desire to extend or expand the Federal Bureau of Investigation into varied and far-flung fields. The Bureau already has a full measure of responsibility within the United States."[82]

Hoover's remissive attitude does not seem to align with subversion paradox theory. Rather than pushing to work abroad, Hoover was instead eager to rid the FBI of overseas work. His calculation seems to have been that it was better for the Bureau to focus on what it knew it could do, especially the fight against domestic subversives.[83] Further, Latin America at the time was not an important source of support for American subversives, hence extending the Bureau's jurisdiction would not have provided a worthwhile advantage in the anti-subversive fight.

Once Hoover realized that the Bureau was capable of operating successfully in Latin America, he pushed for further expansion. In December 1944 he proposed expanding the reach of the SIS to the entire world.[84] In August 1945, after President Truman had ordered the dismantlement of the Office of Strategic Services, Hoover wrote to the newly appointed Attorney General, Thomas Clark, arguing that given "the need for a world-wide intelligence service, it [was] most logical that the system which has worked so successfully in the Western Hemisphere should be extended to a world-wide coverage".[85] Clark concurred, perorating the Bureau's cause to Truman's closest advisers:

> Foreign and domestic intelligence are inseparable and constitute one field of operation (…). In order to cope with the activities of various subversive agents in the United States with speed and dispatch it is entirely evident that their activities must be followed throughout the various countries by one intelligence agency of the United States Government.[86]

In other words, because subversion was one of its priorities, the Bureau had to operate both at home and abroad.

Hoover's attempt to expand worldwide was ultimately a failure. As I will show in greater detail in the next section, Truman did not want to have one agency operating at home and abroad, fearing it would become too powerful and billed as a Gestapo.[87] Hoover continued to try to operate overseas. Having seen that Truman was not receptive, in April 1948 he told the future Republican presidential candidate, Thomas Dewey, "that it was most important to have a strong intelligence service but that there cannot be a so-called division between domestic and foreign intelligence because Communism is international."[88]

In sum, even though Hoover was initially skeptical about expanding abroad, his principals pushed him to do so. Once he realized that the Bureau could succeed in

overseas work, Hoover pressed strongly to retain and expand the Bureau's foreign intelligence capabilities, arguing that in order to fight subversion it was necessary to have an agency that crossed the divide between foreign and domestic intelligence.

Was the FBI under its principals' control?

Before 1936 policymakers' control over the Bureau was rather weak, and the 1936 Directive weakened it even further. The evidence is plentiful. Hoover had files with derogatory information on most government officials, including attorneys general and presidents. For instance, the Bureau opened a file on Frank Murphy within a month after his appointment as Attorney General in December 1938, including derogatory information on his political beliefs and on his personal life.[89] Murphy knew about these files, but if he ever tried to eliminate them he clearly failed. The same can be said of many of his successors, many of whom mistrusted Hoover and the FBI, but did not manage to redress the situation.[90]

Numerous attorneys general failed to rein in some of the FBI's most controversial techniques. An important example is the attempt by Attorney General Robert Jackson to ban wiretapping in 1940.[91] Jackson's ban followed the Communications Act of 1934, with which Congress had forbidden wiretaps, and two Supreme Court verdicts in 1937 and 1939,[92] but it lasted only nine weeks. In an often repeated move, Hoover went around his direct superior and brought his case to the White House.[93] He convinced Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau that the wiretap ban was making it impossible for the FBI to investigate a Nazi plot to finance Roosevelt's opponents and defeat him in the polls. Morgenthau informed the president, who in turn wrote to Jackson reasoning that the Supreme Court could not have possibly "intended [its decision] (…) to apply to grave matters involving the defense of the nation". Roosevelt then issued a secret directive authorizing the Attorney General to approve wiretapping on a case-by-case basis.[94] However, in Hoover's words, Jackson chose to

> have no detailed record kept concerning the cases in which wiretapping would be made. It was agreeable to him [Jackson] that I [Hoover] would maintain a memorandum book in my immediate office, listing the time, places, and cases in which this procedure is to be utilized.[95]

Jackson did not want to have a record of his authorizations of such a controversial practice, but in so doing he could not check whom the FBI was wiretapping and for how long. Hoover could now choose whom to wiretap and renew the tap indefinitely. In this case Jackson chose plausible deniability over effective control. His choice does not fit with the assumption that principals want to control intelligence agencies, but is indicative of the tradeoffs that principals face when dealing with agencies engaging in controversial or illegal practices. The Bureau employed more of these practices as it shifted in the direction of a political intelligence agency, increasingly tempting its principals to adopt an "I don't want to know" attitude. The result was a vicious circle in which the Bureau employed even more illegal practices knowing that its principals would not know about them.

In other cases the Bureau eschewed the Attorney General's control even without the president's help. The most glaring example is the Custodial Detention index, which Hoover had established on his own authority in September 1939. The index listed "both aliens and citizens of the United States (…) [of] German, Italian, and Communist sympathies, (…) [whose] presence at liberty in this country in time of war or national emergency would be dangerous to the public peace and the safety of the United States Government." Hoover had sought Attorney General Jackson's approval for this program only nine months later, and Jackson had granted it after months of negotiations.[96] Francis Biddle, who replaced Jackson in August 1941, believed that the Custodial Detention index "serve[d] no useful purpose", its "classification system [was] inherently unreliable" and there was "no statutory authorization or other present justification for keeping a custodial detention list of citizens". Biddle thus ordered Hoover to cease the program entirely.[97] Hoover did not comply. All he did in response to Biddle's order was to change the name of the program. In August 1943, Hoover wrote to his agents telling them that the Custodial Detention index was henceforth called the Security Index. The Security Index and its cards, Hoover added, "should be considered as strictly confidential, and should at no time be mentioned or alluded to in investigative reports, or discussed with agencies or individuals outside the Bureau".[98] In the words of Theoharis and Cox, Hoover was "so convinced of the correctness of his own assessment of the 'subversive' threat"[99] that he was not going to follow the orders of the Attorney General, especially those coming from someone he viewed, as Biddle later wrote, as "too soft with Communists".[100]

To prevent the discovery of the Security Index and of his other unauthorized activities, Hoover refined the separate filing system he had developed in the mid-1920s.[101] As we have seen, some of these separate files were on the FBI's direct superior, the Attorney General. Others were on Roosevelt's innermost circle, indicating that even the president did not have a strong control of the FBI. For instance, the Bureau had a file detailing the activities of Felix Frankfurter, a strong New Dealer who was appointed by Roosevelt to the Supreme Court.[102] Most provocatively, Hoover kept in his private files derogatory information on the president, with information on communists' supposed preference for Roosevelt,[103] and on the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt.[104]

Why did the FBI not subvert Roosevelt?

Despite being a political intelligence agency weakly controlled by its principals, the FBI did not engage in subversion against the Roosevelt administration.[105] Most likely, Hoover perceived Roosevelt and his cabinet as unwilling to adequately fight against the communist threat, but never found an opportunity to unseat him. The evidence on Hoover's perception of Roosevelt is indirect, as Hoover was careful not to criticize the administration publicly. According to the memoirs of one of his closest assistants, William Sullivan, "Hoover didn't like President Franklin Delano Roosevelt", found "unacceptable" much of the president's staff and "never passed up a chance to make a snide remark when FDR's name was mentioned".[106] This

dislike extended to Roosevelt's attorneys general. Hoover perceived Attorney General Biddle as being soft on communism and FBI agents reported the widespread belief that one of his predecessors, Frank Murphy, was "an out-and-out radical and probably a Communist".[107]

Throughout his career, Hoover described the years under Roosevelt as the period in which the "mortal challenge" of communism reached its maximum strength domestically. Communist Party members multiplied tenfold, from 7,500 members in 1930 to 80,000 in 1944.[108] The 1930s were "the Party's best opportunity for exploitation", as US communists found "fertile fields for agitation" and "hundreds of organizations sprang into existence and were either created or captured by the Communists".[109]

Hoover most likely blamed Roosevelt for this growth in communist strength. Indeed he had numerous reasons for perceiving Roosevelt as soft on communism. For instance, his administration recognized the Soviet Union soon after taking office. It supported the National Labor Relations Act and the surge in unionization that followed it, giving the Communist Party the best opportunity to expand its influence.[110] Finally, US communist leaders themselves supported Roosevelt. Hoover maintained in his own private files the record of a meeting of communist leaders in September 1940, in which they argued that Roosevelt had to be re-elected "regardless of what cost or sacrifice to the Communist Party", because "with Roosevelt in power it will be possible to keep J. Edgar Hoover's hands tied".[111]

Hoover thought about removing Roosevelt from the White House, albeit in a democratically legitimate way. According to Sullivan's memoirs, Hoover considered running for president in 1936. A popular national figure after the FBI's successes in the war on crime, Hoover thought "he could run as a Republican and turn Roosevelt and his crew of liberals out of office." He sent "some of his most trusted veteran agents (…) on a top-secret mission to test the political waters" but desisted because, "much to Hoover's surprise, response to his presidential ambitions was overwhelmingly negative."[112]

Roosevelt was simply too strong for Hoover to remove him, for two reasons. First, removing an incumbent administration in the American presidential system is extremely hard, other than via the ballot box. Second, there was never a close election that Hoover could have swayed one way or another. Roosevelt won all his three re-election bids decisively, conquering 46 states out of 48 in 1936, 38 in 1940 and 36 in 1944. Faced with a president he mistrusted and despised but could not remove, Hoover was forced to desist. In Sullivan's words, Hoover "was passively anti-Roosevelt only because he couldn't be actively anti-Roosevelt."[113] The Bureau's subversive attempt had to wait for a weaker president whom Hoover also perceived as soft on communism.

The FBI under Truman's first term and subversion in the 1948 elections

By the time he succeeded Roosevelt as president, Truman had already developed a negative opinion of the FBI and of its director, for several reasons. Truman's political mentor in Missouri, Thomas Pendergast, had been investigated by the FBI for corruption and arrested in 1939.[114] Further, Truman had a good rapport and

frequently exchanged views with Senator Wheeler, a critic (and target) of the FBI for more than twenty years, and with Max Lowenthal, a lawyer who went on to write a critical history of the FBI in 1950.[115] Lastly, as head of the Senate's Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, Truman had asked Hoover to have access to the Bureau's files, but Hoover refused.[116]

Less than a month into his presidency, Truman told the White House Budget Director Harold Smith that Hoover was "building up a Gestapo". A few days later he wrote in his diary that "we want no Gestapo or Secret Police. FBI is tending in that direction. They are dabbling in sex-life scandals and plain blackmail (…). This must stop."[117] Truman was eager to limit the FBI's reach. In September 1945 he told Harold Smith that he wanted to cut back the FBI's budget at least to its prewar levels and to confine it to the United States. When Hoover presented his plan for a worldwide intelligence service later that month, Truman rejected it outright.[118] In November, Hoover sent him a report on Soviet espionage in the United States. The report named several Soviet spies working for the US government, including Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White, but Truman disregarded it, probably out of mistrust for Hoover.[119] For the first time Hoover faced a president who acted against the Bureau's interests and ignored his warnings.

Hoover and other leading Bureau officials soon reciprocated Truman's mistrust. They perceived the president as underestimating the domestic communist threat and as unwilling to fight decisively against it. Carta De Loach, then a mid-ranking Bureau agent and later Hoover's deputy, argued that "President Truman was not a man who appreciated or understood intelligence". Truman "disliked Mr. Hoover from the start", "thought that Mr. Hoover was his enemy", felt "hatred" for him and the FBI, and "refused to read files on our reports or memoranda on intelligence".[120] William Sullivan argued that "Hoover's hatred of Truman knew no bounds", both because Truman refused to grant Hoover direct access to the Oval Office and because he dismissed much of what Hoover produced.[121] Attorney General Clark similarly stated that he would challenge as "overexaggerated" Hoover's "idea that the Communists were pretty strong"[122] and that it was "in the area of security – Communist infiltration" that the administration and the FBI "began to fall out".[123] Scholars agree that Bureau officials soon perceived the Truman administration as soft on communism. For instance, Kenneth O'Reilly states that "FBI officials viewed the domestic communist threat as far more serious than the Truman administration. In effect, they viewed the administration itself as 'subversive' and sought to document Truman's alleged 'softness' on communism."[124]

The Bureau was thus a political intelligence agency, poorly controlled by its principals, whom it perceived as unwilling to adequately fight what they viewed as a strong subversive threat. All that was missing for the FBI to subvert was an opportunity to do so.

Given how hard it is to remove an administration in the American political system, the opportunity only came with the 1948 presidential elections. In the meanwhile, the FBI decided to educate the American public on the seriousness of the subversive threat and to weaken the president by secretly assisting his political foes. The FBI could not afford to publicly attack the administration, because doing so would have compromised its image of political neutrality and given Truman the chance to fire Hoover.

In February 1946, the FBI's Executive Conference, comprising all the Bureau's highest ranking officials, decided to launch a public campaign to expose the domestic communist threat, without revealing the FBI's role and without informing the Attorney General.[125] The campaign was meant to reveal "the basically Russian nature of the Communist Party in this country" and "the support which the [Communist] Party receives from 'Liberal' sources and from its connections in the labor unions". The strategy was for the FBI to "prepare educational material which can be released through available channels so that in the event of an emergency we will have an informed public opinion".[126] These channels were largely the political foes of the Truman administration in the media, civil society and Congress.[127]

For instance, the FBI gave access to its files to the Jesuit priest, Father John Cronin. Cronin published a series of fiercely anti-communist pamphlets that first circulated among the clergy and then received wider circulation thanks again to the FBI. Three new pamphlets ghost-written by Cronin were published in 400,000 copies by the Chambers of Commerce in October 1946, just before the mid-term elections.[128] Cronin's allegations, including the naming of Alger Hiss and other policymakers as members of the US Communist Party who had infiltrated the government, were at the heart of the campaign rhetoric of the Republican Party in the mid-term elections and beyond. The Republicans won a majority in both houses of Congress after having called the election a choice between "Communism and Republicanism" and having promised to do their utmost to "remove the Red menace from America".[129]

In 1947 Hoover started using the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and as the main conduit for exposing the communist threat and attacking the Truman administration.[130]

Hoover first raised the profile of HUAC by giving an unprecedented testimony on the perils of communism in March 1947. Hoover praised the Committee's role in making the communist threat public, arguing that "victory will be assured once Communists are identified and exposed". He also laid down what became the dominant view of communism on both sides of the American political spectrum. The US communist movement stood "for the destruction of our American form of government" and gave "its allegiance (…) to Russia, not the United States". The Party posed a vital threat. Indeed, it was "far better organized that were the Nazis in occupied countries prior to their capitulation."[131]

In May, Hoover decided "to extend every assistance to this Committee", after being reassured by the Committee chairman Parnell Thomas that the Bureau's assistance would have remained secret.[132] Given its virtually exclusive possession of the information the Committee needed to expose communist agents, the Bureau was able to shape the Committee's agenda. Even HUAC's chairman Parnell Thomas recognized that "the Director more than any other person is responsible for this Committee not being put out of business."[133]

Truman probably realized that the FBI was aiding his anti-communist foes in Congress and in March 1948 he ordered a ban on congressional access to FBI files. The FBI ignored him,[134] continuing to aid HUAC's hearings on the presence of communist spies among the administration's allies in government. The FBI had been

telling the Truman administration for years of the existence of a Soviet espionage ring in Washington, and had been frustrated by the administration's lack of action. Attempts at prosecution had hardly been successful, inducing Hoover to leak part of the information on espionage to HUAC. The hearings on the espionage cases began in August, timed, as HUAC chairman Thomas said, "to put the heat on Truman".[135]

The most prominent case was the one against Alger Hiss, a former high-ranking State Department official. Hiss was accused by a former communist, Whittaker Chambers, of having been a Soviet spy and a Communist Party member in the 1930s and of having worked to make the Yalta agreement more favorable to the Soviets.[136] Chambers' accusations thus contributed to shape the image of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations as having treacherously harbored communists, who then did great harm to the national interest.[137] Giving substance to those accusations was Hoover's FBI.[138] One of Hoover's closest aides later recalled that "we were giving Richard Nixon, who was in charge of the [Hiss] investigation, every possible assistance."[139] Nixon himself confirmed this. In a private conversation recorded by the FBI he stated that "he had worked very close (*sic*) with the Bureau and with [Assistant Director] Nichols during the past year on [the Hiss-Chambers] matter".[140]

It is now widely accepted that many government officials accused by the Bureau and HUAC were indeed Soviet agents.[141] At the same time, the FBI regularly manipulated intelligence to substantiate the "sensational charges" made by some of its anti-communist witnesses, despite being aware that the information upon which the charges was based was "not completely substantiated by actual facts".[142] Preserving the credibility of its witnesses was deemed to be more important than giving a fair rendering of the evidence, to the point that the discrepancies in their statements were catalogued but not made public by the FBI.[143]

Next to these regular instances of politicization, the FBI also engaged in subversion, directly damaging Truman's electoral prospects. With polls and pundits predicting a Republican victory in the presidential election in 1948, the Bureau supported the campaign of the Republican governor of New York Thomas Dewey.

William Sullivan described this subversive attempt in his memoirs. When Dewey entered the primaries,

> Hoover and two of his closest aides, Clyde Tolson and Louis Nichols, secretly agreed to put the resources of the bureau at Dewey's disposal. With the help of the FBI, Hoover believed Dewey couldn't lose. He would win the nomination and defeat Truman. In exchange for his help, the director believed that when Dewey became president he would name Hoover as his attorney general and make Nichols director of the FBI. (…) Dewey was most grateful of the bureau's support, and made use of its resources while preparing for a national radio broadcast debate with [Republican candidate Harold] Stassen on communism that was to take place in Portland, Oregon, on 17 May 1948. Many agents – I was one – worked for days culling FBI files for any fact that could be of use to Dewey.[144]

Hoover's files confirm Sullivan's account in every detail.[145] Sullivan then described the Bureau's support for Dewey in the campaign against Truman. The literature unanimously agrees that this occurred,[146] but there is no primary evidence confirming this second part of Sullivan's account, most likely because it was destroyed after Truman's victory. After Dewey's victory in the primaries, Sullivan recalled,

> the FBI helped Dewey during the campaign itself by giving him everything we had that could hurt Truman, thought there wasn't much. We resurrected the president's former association with Jim Prendergast (*sic*) (…) and tried to create the impression that Truman was too ignorant to deal with the emerging Communist threat. We even prepared studies for Dewey which were released under his name, as if he and his staff had done the work. I worked on some of these projects myself. No one in the bureau gave Truman any chance of winning.[147]

Truman won the 1948 elections, despite the Bureau's efforts. Yet the failure of the FBI's subversive attempt was the end neither of its fight against Truman nor of its existence as a political intelligence agency. Hoover continued to support Truman's opponents, providing the backbone to what generally goes under the name of McCarthyism but would be more appropriately called Hooverism.[148] Like many presidents after him, Truman considered firing Hoover for his insubordination, but decided not to, because firing such a powerful and popular figure would have damaged the Democratic Party's prospects in the 1950 and 1952 elections.[149]

Conclusion

I argue that the Bureau of Investigation transformed itself from an apolitical law enforcement agency into a political intelligence agency once it began to fight against a subversive enemy it perceived as strong. Its principals poorly controlled it and the attempts to transform it again into an apolitical law-enforcement agency were only partially successful. After Roosevelt's request to investigate subversive activities in America, the FBI moved again towards the ideal-type of the political intelligence agency. In 1948, it tried to remove Truman by assisting his foes in Congress and in the polls, in the belief that he was too weak in the fight against communism.

A first alternative explanation is based on bureaucratic grievances, but it is not fully convincing. The FBI was very successful at expanding its turf and budget throughout the Roosevelt administration, whereas Truman took a hostile view to the FBI's requests from the very beginning. Bureaucratic grievances were most likely part of Hoover's motivation for trying to remove Truman, but they cannot explain his attitude towards Roosevelt. Hoover never overcame his profound dislike for Roosevelt and even sought the opportunity to unseat him in the 1936 elections, soon after Roosevelt had allowed the FBI to fully return to the anti-subversive field. William Sullivan found Hoover's attitude towards Roosevelt to be puzzling, precisely because Hoover continued to oppose Roosevelt despite the fact that "the FBI achieved its greatest growth during the Roosevelt years".[150]

Similarly, coup-proofing does not explain why subversion occurred in 1948 but not in the 1930s. The FBI was the dominant domestic intelligence agency in both periods, but it faced a stronger rival in 1948, a year after the creation of the CIA, than in 1936.

Third, economic explanations also don't explain why subversion occurred in 1948 and not during the Great Depression in the 1930s, when the economic crisis should have made subversion more likely.

A more personal explanation, centered on Hoover's ambitions, is more convincing. By not challenging Roosevelt and supporting Dewey, Hoover was acting opportunistically, bandwagoning with the candidate largely expected to win. If Sullivan's account is correct, Hoover hoped to be nominated Attorney General by Dewey, while keeping the Bureau under control via his trusted aide Nichols. Hoover had an additional reason for currying favor with Dewey. During Dewey's previous presidential campaign in 1944, the FBI had gathered contradictory pieces of information on Dewey's intent to fire Hoover if elected president.[151] By helping Dewey get elected, Hoover was both earning his gratitude and collecting evidence, potentially usable for blackmail, of the less than orthodox means which Dewey had used to win the presidency. My explanation and this last one complement each other, but mine is temporally and logically prior. Without the weak control exercised by the president and the Attorney General, in turn explained by the Bureau's subversive priority, Hoover would not have been able to launch covert attacks against his principals, much less use those attacks to pursue his personal ambitions.

Notes

1 See Bonaparte's letter to President Roosevelt on 14 January 1909 and Fox (2003). www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o60016
2 See the Attorney General's annual report to Congress for 1907, pp. 9–10, and his testimony in front of the House Appropriations Committee on 17 January 1908. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b5145514&view=1up&seq=18
3 Fox (2003) and a Memorandum by FBI Special Agent Findlay to Director Hoover, 19 November 1943.
4 Fox (2003), Theoharis (2004), pp. 16–18, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 39–40 ,and Weiner (2012), pp. 11–12.
5 Theoharis (2004), p. 17, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 55–56, and Williams (1981a), p. 561.
6 Bonaparte's reassurances are discussed and partially cited in Weiner (2012), p. 12, and Theoharis (2004), p. 17.
7 Findlay's memo to Hoover (19 November 1943), Theoharis (2004), pp. 18–19, and Jeffreys-Jones (2004), p. 62.
8 The FBI's official historian (Fox (2005)) and a severe critic of the FBI (Theoharis (1999), pp. 4–6), agree on this point.
9 Cited in Theoharis (2004), p. 17.
10 Fox (2005).
11 Ibidem. See also Theoharis (1999), p. 7 ,and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 69, who notes that it was this "innovation that made possible political work".
12 For the importance of the war-time acts for the Bureau's expansion, see Theoharis (2004) pp.21–22, Fox (2005), Weiner (2012), p. 5, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 70–71.

13 The literature is unanimous on this point. See Theoharis (2004) p.22, Weiner (2012) pp.14–16, Kessler (2002), pp. 10–11, O'Reilly (1983), p. 13, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 70–71.
14 This estimate is made in Jeffreys-Jones (2007) p.71. Weiner (2012) p.14 notes that of the 1,055 convicted under the Espionage Act not one was a spy and most were political dissidents.
15 Even today, most FBI historians agree on this point. See Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 72–73, Keller (1989), p. 8, Weiner (2012,) pp. 17–19. For a dissenting opinion, see Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 57, who believe that there was not "even a remote possibility of a serious uprising in 1919–1920." Regardless of the historiographical debate on how severe the threat of subversion really was, what matters for my theory is that principals and the agency perceived it as plausible at the time.
16 Theoharis (2004), p. 21. The FBI's historian, Fox (2005), adds that "the only significant danger that (Attorney General Gregory) saw were the subversive activities of radicals like the International Workers of the World".
17 Quoted in Weiner (2012), p. 22 and p. 6.
18 Senate hearings are quoted in Weiner (2012), p. 17.
19 Theoharis (2004), p. 24, Weiner (2012), pp. 17–19, Shepley (2011), p. 21.
20 Weiner (2012), pp. 19–21, Kessler (2002), pp. 14–15, Theoharis (2004), pp. 24–25, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 72–73.
21 Cited in Weiner (2012), pp. 26–27.
22 There is a consensus in the literature on the Bureau's rapid transformation, even though it is described in different terms. See, for instance, Williams (1981a), p. 561, and Kessler (2002), p.11.
23 There is a consensus in the literature on this point. See Williams (1981a), p. 577, Theoharis (2004), p. 2, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 70–73, and Weiner (2012), pp. 33–35.
24 Theoharis and Cox (1988) p.59 and Shepley (2011), pp. 23–24.
25 Theoharis (2004), pp. 25–26 and Weiner (2012), pp. 29–30.
26 The Bureau's documents surrounding the raids are in NARA, RG65, M1085, reels 931–932. See also Weiner (2012), pp. 33–34, and Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 63.
27 Williams (1981a), p. 563, Theoharis (2004), p. 27, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 74, and Weiner (2012), pp. 33–36.
28 The most detailed account of the aftermath of the Palmer raids is Williams (1981a), see especially pp. 563–568. See also Weiner (2012), pp. 37–40, Shepley (2011), pp. 25–27 and Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 64–66.
29 Cited in Williams (1981a), p. 569.
30 See Weiner (2012), p. 41, which in turn is based on the account of the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels. There is no evidence that Bureau officials knew of Wilson's request to Palmer, perhaps because Palmer did not want to heed it and thus did not tell the Bureau.
31 Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 65–68, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 74, and Weiner (2012), pp. 40–45.
32 Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 67–68, and Weiner (2012), pp. 41–43.
33 The Radical Division's original scope and Hoover's directive are discussed and cited in Theoharis (2004), p. 29 and in Weiner (2012), p. 45. That directive also marked an explicit shift away from law enforcement and in the direction of secret intelligence. Hoover in fact argued that subversives were better fought in secret, as the government could not deal with "the radical situation from a criminal prosecution standpoint".
34 Cited in O'Reilly (1983), p. 17.
35 Theoharis and Cox (2004), pp. 75–76 and Weiner (2012), p. 55.
36 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 80, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 79, and Weiner (2012), pp. 57–58.
37 Weiner (2012), pp. 55–56. See also O'Reilly (1983), p. 18.
38 Stone's letter to Jack Alexander, 21 September 1937, cited in Mason (1956), p. 149.
39 Mason (1956), pp. 142–149, Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 81 and Kessler (2002), p. 18.

40 The literature is unanimous on this point. See Mason (1956), pp.149–151, Kessler (2002), pp.18–19, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 84, Weiner (2012), pp. 58–59, Theoharis (2004), pp. 32–33.
41 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 83, and Mason (1956), pp. 150–151.
42 There is a consensus in the literature that the Bureau's political activities were scaled back, but never ceased. See Williams (1981b), especially p. 6, Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 84–87, Gentry (1991), pp. 208–209, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 85, Weiner (2012), pp. 59–60, Kessler (2002), p. 20, and Theoharis (2004), p. 36.
43 Williams (1981b), p. 8, Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 86 and pp.144–146, Schrecker (1998), pp. 218–219, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 85, Theoharis (2004), p. 36, and Kessler (2002), pp. 20–21.
44 See the episodes discussed in Williams (1981b), p. 9 and pp. 19–21.
45 Hoover made this argument to Stone's successor as Attorney General, John Sargent. See Williams (1981b), p. 18, and O'Reilly (1983), pp. 15–16, who adds that Hoover had initially recommended legislation proscribing radical propaganda. Theoharis (1991), p. 179 similarly mentions Hoover's general desire "to avoid legislative authorization" for anti-subversive investigations, "fearing that leading congressmen would revive memories of the post-World War I Red Scare".
46 No direct evidence shows that this was part of Hoover's motivation, but this is the position he took two decades later, when Congress debated whether to authorize an index of Communist affiliates which Hoover had already developed without Congress's knowledge. See Theoharis (2004), pp. 68–69.
47 Cited in Williams (1981b), p. 9 and in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 92.
48 The most complete discussion of the Bureau's political surveillance in this period is Williams (1981b), pp. 6–15. The rest of the literature agrees with William's interpretation. See O'Reilly (1983) pp.19–19, Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 92–94, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 120–121, and Weiner (2012), pp. 60–63.
49 There is a consensus in the literature that Hoover was circumventing Stone's ban on political surveillance. See Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 92–93, Williams (1981b), pp. 8–9, Weiner (2012), p. 62, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 84. Kessler (2002), p. 20, is a lonely exception, arguing incorrectly: "A chameleon, Hoover renounced his previous position on radicalism."
50 For instance, on 14 April 1933, when Hoover seemed about to be replaced as director, Stone wrote to Felix Frankfurter saying that Hoover "refused to yield to any kind of political pressure" and "withdrew it (the Bureau) wholly from its extra-legal activities". Cited in Mason (1956), p. 152. See also Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 91–92.
51 See the remarks by Ramsey Clark, discussed in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 87.
52 For a similar interpretation of Hoover's motivation, see Williams (1981b), p. 18.
53 Cited in Theoharis (1991), p. 3.
54 Weiner (2012), pp. 60–61 and Theoharis (1991), pp. 4–7.
55 On the Personal and Confidential files, see Theoharis (1991), p. 3 and Theoharis (2004), pp. 109–110. Hoover's assistant Helen Gandy destroyed Personal and Confidential files immediately after Hoover's death, following Hoover's instructions. Official and Confidential files escaped destruction for reasons that are still unclear. On the Obscene File, which Hoover created in March 1925, just weeks after Stone had left the Department of Justice for the Supreme Court, see Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 94–96, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 121.
56 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 94 describe Sargent as an "amiable nonentity (…) who saw even less evil than Stone had seen before him".
57 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 109.
58 Theoharis (2004), p. 36, and O'Reilly (1983), p. 21.
59 For instance, in 1931 five Bureau agents visited the house of George Menhinick, the editor of a financial newsletter who had criticized the President's optimistic economic predictions, and scared him into silence. In this case the Attorney General had asked Edgar Hoover to intervene. In other cases the Bureau would forward to the White

House unsolicited information on the President's critics. See Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 109 and O'Reilly (1983), p. 20.

60 O'Reilly (1983), p. 19, Theoharis (2004), p. 36, Weiner (2012), pp. 67–68, Williams (1981b), pp. 15–16, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 121–122.

61 Williams (1981b), pp. 22–23, and O'Reilly (1983), p. 21.

62 Even a strong critic of the Bureau's political surveillance like Athan Theoharis agrees on this point. See Theoharis (2004), p. 36.

63 Theoharis (2004), pp. 38–43, Kessler (2002), ch. 2, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), especially pp. 89–91. On the Bureau's image, see Poveda, Tony "The Traditions and Culture of the FBI", in Theoharis (1999), ch. 5, especially pp. 174–177.

64 Under the 1916 amendment to the Appropriations Act, described above, the Secretary of State could request Bureau's investigations, but the Bureau could not ask the State Department to investigate. See Williams (1981b), p. 17.

65 Williams (1981b), pp. 21–22, and Theoharis (2004), p. 44.

66 All quotes are from Hoover's Confidential Memo, written on the same day of the meeting. The memo is now in NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 22, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 136, "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano". It is also reproduced in Theoharis (1991), pp. 180–181.

67 Ibidem.

68 All quotes are from Hoover's Confidential Memo, 25 August 1936, in NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 22, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 136, "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano". It is also reproduced in Theoharis (1991), p. 182.

69 For a similar judgment as to why Hoover wrote the memoranda, see Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 123.

70 Hoover's instructions mentioned "Maritime Industry, Government affairs, steel industry, coal industry, newspaper field, clothing, garment and fur industry, general strike activities, Armed Forces, educational institutions, general activities – Communist and Affiliated Organizations, Fascisti, Anti-Fascisti movements, and activities in Organized Labor organizations." Cited in Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 151–152.

71 There is a consensus in the literature on Hoover's lack of enthusiasm for the fight against the extreme right, and on his desire to fight the extreme left instead. See O'Reilly (1983), p. 40, Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 149–150, Weiner (2012), pp. 73–74, Keller (1989), p. 61, Theoharis (2002), p. 36, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 137.

72 Memo from Attorney General Biddle to Hoover, 29 May 1942. The memo is in NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 22, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 136, "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano".

73 Theoharis and Cox (1988) pp.149–151. Several authors describe Hoover's fight against the subversive left as an obsession. See, for instance, Keller (1989), p. 61, and Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 150.

74 Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 127. Theoharis (2004), p. 64, similarly defines the FBI as the "unacknowledged intelligence arm of the White House". Sullivan (1979), p. 37, states that "Roosevelt unfortunately established the precedent of using the FBI as the president's political tool." O'Reilly (1983), p. 21 argues that "the Bureau's political activities accelerated when the Roosevelt administration offered the Bureau of Investigation an opportunity to legitimize its domestic intelligence operations. First, in early May 1934 (…) [t]hen in August 1936".

75 Amongst the many examples of the Bureau's political activities, see Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 155, 176–177 and 186, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 126–132, O'Reily (1983), pp. 24, 56–59, a memorandum by Hoover on 7 November 1938, now at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 22, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 136, "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano" and the exchanges between Hoover, Roosevelt and the president's personal secretary in 1940, available at www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/vol6/html/ChurchV6_0231b.htm. The Bureau sought evidence of congressman Fish's links to the Dominican dictator Trujillo and tried but failed to find him guilty of tax evasion. Against Senator Nye, the FBI investigated an

unfounded allegation that he had been involved in a "shady deal" concerning the sale of stocks of a North Dakota newspaper. When the FBI agent in charge of a case argued that the allegation was politically motivated and due to Nye's isolationist stance, Hoover insisted that the agent investigate the allegations further, immediately interviewing the attorney who had first denounced the senator.

76 Memo from Roosevelt to the Attorney General, 11 May 1942, cited in O'Reilly (1983), p. 25. Roosevelt was asking the FBI to investigate Senator Robert Reynolds who, according to a periodical, had worked closely with a pro-Hitler propagandist.

77 O'Reilly (1983), pp. 21, 25.

78 In 1937, for instance, the FBI briefly monitored congressman Jerry O'Connell, who had criticized the treatment of the socialist prisoner Tom Mooney in San Quentin prison. See O'Reilly (1983), p. 21. Monitoring of congressmen remained ad hoc throughout this period. It was only in the mid-1950s that the FBI systematically began to create files, many containing derogatory information, on all congressional candidates and members of Congress. See Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 213–214.

79 A similar argument is made in Theoharis (2004), pp. 1–2, and Keller (1989), pp. 12–14, who argues that 1936 marked the beginning of an increasingly political, autonomous and uncontrolled domestic intelligence agency, using aggressive and unauthorized tactics.

80 Roosevelt's directive is cited in Troy (1981), p. 17, and Webb (2004).

81 Letter from Hoover to Gen. Miles on 2 August 1940, discussed in Webb (2004), note 31, and Troy (1981), p. 20.

82 The quote is from Hoover's letter to Army Intelligence officer Strong, on 10 September 1942, cited in Webb (2004).

83 Webb (2004) advances a similar interpretation.

84 See Thorne and Patterson (1996), p .4, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/pg_4. See also Webb (2004), who speaks of a marked change in Hoover's attitude after October 1942.

85 Memorandum from FBI Director Hoover to Attorney General Clark, 29 August 1945, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d5

86 Clarke to Budget Bureau's director Harold Smith and assistant director Appleby, 21 September 1945. Cited in Rudgers (2000), p. 79, and in Weiner (2012), p. 470.

87 See the "Memorandum from Morton Chiles of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Director (Hoover)", 2 October 1945, reporting on a conversation between Truman and Chiles, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d22. See also Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 141–143.

88 See Hoover's Memo to FBI Assistant Directors Tolson and Nichols, 27 April 1948, now at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 20, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 57, "Dewey, Governor Thomas".

89 The file is now at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 20, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 118, "Murphy, Frank". It includes reports of the "unfavorable reaction of the general public to Murphy's appointment", including allegations that he was "an out-and-out radical and probably a Communist". Another document reports that he had "quite a reputation at the Washington Hotel" and that "he either is under the influence of some sort of dope or whisky". The file was maintained even after Murphy became a Supreme Court Justice. See also Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 164, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 132, and O'Reilly (1983), p. 60.

90 See the memo from FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm to Hoover, 1 March 1940, reproduced in Theoharis (1991), p. 336.

91 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 171, and Weiner (2012), pp. 84–85.

92 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 170, and Weiner (2012), p. 84.

93 See, for instance, Sullivan (1979), p. 38.

94 Roosevelt's directive is reproduced in Theoharis (1991), p. 134. See also Weiner (2012), pp. 87–88, and Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 171.

95 Quoted in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 171.

96 Hoover's order creating the Custodial Detention Index is cited and discussed in Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 172–173.
97 Memo from Attorney General Biddle to Hoover and Assistant Attorney General Cox, 16 July 1943, available at www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/vol6/html/ChurchV6_0211b.htm. See also Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 173, and Weiner (2012), p. 122.
98 Memo from Hoover to FBI's Special Agents in Charge, 14 August 1943, available at www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/vol6/html/ChurchV6_0212b.htm. See also Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 173–174, and Weiner (2012), p. 122.
99 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 173.
100 Biddle (1962), p. 258. Biddle's memoirs offer an overwhelmingly positive judgment of Hoover (pp. 258–261). Biddle mentions some of Hoover's "weaknesses", such as "his obsession with the Communists", and his tendency not to be loyal to those he did not trust, but he does not seem to have realized that Hoover was disobeying many of his orders, or at least did not want to say it publicly while Hoover was still the FBI's director. See also Weiner (2012), p. 123.
101 The most important innovation was the creation of the "Do Not File" procedure in 1942. "Do Not File" files were sent to the Director or to his closest assistants, kept in their offices and supposedly destroyed every six months. Hoover instituted this procedure to approve, on his own authority, the use of so-called black-bag jobs, mainly break-ins to install bugs or photograph material in anti-subversive investigations. These techniques, as FBI Assistant Director William Sullivan wrote more than two decades later, were "clearly illegal" but they were also "an invaluable technique in combating subversive activities". See Theoharis (2004), pp. 58–59, Weiner (2012), p. 98, and the memo from Sullivan to FBI assistant director Carta De Loach, 19 July 1966, reproduced in Theoharis (1991), pp. 129–130.
102 See Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 132 and O'Reilly (1983), p. 314, note 56.
103 Memo from E. E. Sackett (Special Agent in Charge in New York) to Hoover, 30 September 1940, now at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 14, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 48, "Communist Party".
104 See the documents reproduced in Theoharis (1991) pp. 59–65, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 132–133, Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 191–193, O'Reily (1983), p. 52, and Kessler (2002), p. 104.
105 Of course, attempted subversion may have occurred and remained secret to this day. As in all scientific enquiries, all I can do is I base my analysis on the evidence that is currently available and stand ready to modify it if further evidence emerges.
106 Sullivan (1979), p. 35 and p. 37. Sullivan rose through the ranks of the FBI from World War Two until 1971, when, as assistant to the director, he broke with Hoover and was dismissed. He was a disgruntled former employee, yet his account of Hoover's behavior in 1936 and, as I will show, in the 1948 elections, is widely accepted.
107 See Hoover's files at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 20, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 118, "Murphy, Frank" and Weiner (2012), p. 123.
108 Hoover (1957), p. 64. Figures on US Communist Party membership are notoriously unreliable, yet its growth throughout the Roosevelt Administration is undisputed. Schrecker (1998), p. 15, and Weiner (2012), p. 74 use similar, although not identical, figures.
109 Hoover (1969), pp. 56, 28, 113, and Hoover (1957), p. 65.
110 Schrecker (1998), p. 14 and Weiner (2012), p. 74.
111 Memo from E. E. Sackett (Special Agent in Charge in New York) to Hoover, 30 September 1940, now at NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 14, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 48, "Communist Party".
112 Sullivan (1979), pp. 35–36.
113 Sullivan (1979), p. 35.
114 Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 140. Truman never distanced himself from Pendergast and even attended his funeral in January 1945, just days after having been sworn in as vice-president.

115 Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 140.
116 Carta De Loach's interview with Susan Rosenfeld, 11 November 2005, FBI Oral History Project, p. 58 and p. 130, available at www.nleomf.org/assets/pdfs/nlem/oral-histories/FBI_DeLoach_interview.pdf.
117 Cited in Weiner (2012), p. 134. See also US Senate (1976), *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans,* Book III, p. 434.
118 Thorne and Patterson (1996) p.4, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945–1950. The Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*.
119 Weiner (2012), pp. 138–139, and Kessler (2002), p. 83.
120 Carta De Loach's interview with Susan Rosenfeld, 11 November 2005, FBI Oral History Project, p. 58 and p. 118, www.nleomf.org/assets/pdfs/nlem/oral-histories/FBI_DeLoach_interview.pdf. Ibidem, p. 129 De Loach argued defensively that "it wasn't so much Mr. Hoover's animosity towards Truman as it was President Truman's –towards Mr. Hoover."
121 Sullivan (1979), p. 38.
122 Clark's interview in Demaris (1975), pp. 127–128.
123 Second Oral History Interview by Jerry Ness with Tom Clark, 8 February 1973, Truman Library Oral History Project, pp. 108–112, www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/clarktc.htm#oh2. Clark confirmed the Administration's disregard for Hoover's intelligence saying that after the war there was "a phenomenal increase in reports that I would get from him (Hoover) with reference to alleged Communist infiltration", but, for the most part, he "would not even see them." He also later found out "that the F.B.I. had created a separate file; and whenever any derogatory information about me would come into the Department, why they would put it in that file." Clark stated he believed Hoover when he told him that he did not know the file existed.
124 O'Reilly (1983), p. 101. Weiner (2012), p. 146 similarly argues that Hoover's "rage at the president's reluctance to fight a full-bore war on communism grew ferocious." Schrecker (2002), p. 28, speaks of "the FBI chief's growing dissatisfaction with what he believed was the Truman administration's lax attitude toward internal security." See also idem (1998), pp. 232–233: "Hoover viewed the (Truman) administration as an adversary" and "he fretted about the administration's seeming indifference to the problem of Communists in government and its failure to act on the FBI's information about them."
125 Theoharis (2004), p. 89 explains the decision saying that "FBI officials had always believed that Communists posed a serious subversive threat but also that the general public was either indifferent or unaware of this threat."
126 The quotes are from a Memo from Assistant FBI Director Ladd to Hoover, on 27 February 1946, cited in the US Senate (1976), *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans,* Book III, p. 430. See also ibidem, *Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, Book II, p. 66, O'Reilly (1983), p. 76, and Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 205.
127 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 205.
128 O'Reilly (1983), pp. 103–105, Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 217–218, Theoharis (2002), pp. 144–151, and Weiner (2012), pp. 146–147.
129 O'Reilly (1983), p. 104, Theoharis (2002), pp. 144–151, and Weiner (2012), p. 147.
130 The literature is unanimous on Hoover's use of HUAC as a conduit for attacking the Truman administration and exposing the communist threat. It was not the only conduit, however. For instance Hoover also aided Senator Homer Ferguson's Government Appropriations Subcommittee. See O'Reilly (1983), pp. 94–100, Theoharis and Cox (1988), especially p. 215 and pp. 250–251, Schrecker (2002), pp. 34–37, and Weiner (2012), pp. 148–150.
131 Partially reproduced in Schrecker (2002), pp. 126–133. See also Weiner (2012), pp. 148–149.
132 Hoover's notation on a memo from Nichols to Tolson, 13 May 1947, cited in Theoharis (2002), p. 159.

133 Memorandum from FBI Assistant Director Nichols to FBI Associate Director Tolson, 28 October 1947, cited in Theoharis (2002), p. 164. Nichols, who was HUAC's contact within the Bureau, was reporting a conversation with Thomas.
134 Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 262, and O'Reilly (1983), p. 81.
135 Quoted in O'Reilly (1983), p. 110.
136 For reasons that are still unclear, Chambers provided concrete evidence of Hiss's espionage only in early December 1948, after the elections. See Chambers' statement to the FBI, reproduced in Schrecker (2002), pp. 148–151. Chambers explained that he had "not previously mentioned the procuring and passing of any documents" in order "to preserve the human elements involved."
137 The Hiss-Chambers hearings are partially reproduced in Schrecker (2002), pp. 138–148.
138 The literature is unanimous on this point. See O'Reilly (1983), pp. 105–109, Theoharis (2002), pp. 119–121, Schrecker (2002), pp. 36–37, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), pp. 154–155, Weiner (2012), pp. 158–159.
139 Sullivan (1979), p. 95. Nixon was then a freshman Republican congressman and a member of HUAC.
140 Cited in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 252, from a conversation between Nixon and two former FBI agents in December 1948. In his memoirs, Nixon (1978), p. 58, falsely stated that "because of Truman's executive order we were not able to get any direct help from J. Edgar Hoover or the FBI. However, we had some informal contacts with a lower level agent that proved helpful in the investigations". In fact, Nixon was in direct contact with Assistant Director Nichols. For instance, Nichols reported a late night phone call by Nixon informing him of Chambers' latest revelations in a memorandum on 2 December 1948, cited in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 252.
141 On Alger Hiss, for instance, see the KGB's telegram from Washington to Moscow on 30 March 1945, reproduced in Schrecker (2002), pp. 136–137.
142 Memorandum from Assistant Director Ladd to Hoover, 15 May 1948, cited in Schrecker (1998), p. 230.
143 Schrecker (1998), pp. 230–231.
144 Sullivan (1979), pp. 43–44.
145 See Hoover's memoranda in NARA, RG65, UD 05-D Entry 14, Box 14, Hoover's Official and Confidential Files, File 57, "Dewey, Governor Thomas".
146 O'Reilly (1983), p. 110, Theoharis and Cox (1988), pp. 263–264, Gentry (1991), pp. 356–359, Schrecker (1998), pp. 232–233, Kessler (2002), p. 103, Summers (2003), p. 154 and pp. 169–170, Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 161, and Weiner (2012), pp. 161–162.
147 Ibidem, p. 44.
148 Schrecker (1998), p. 203: "had observers known in the 1950s what they have learned since the 1970s, when the Freedom of Information Act opened the Bureau's files, 'McCarthyism' would probably have been called 'Hooverism'." Schrecker's judgment is cited approvingly in Jeffreys-Jones (2007), p. 155, and Sbardellati (2012), p. 5. See also Sullivan (interviewed by Demaris (1975), p. 166): "We were the ones who made the McCarthy hearings possible. We fed McCarthy all the material he was using."
149 Do Not File memo from Tolson to Nichols, 13 July 1949, now in Nichols' Official and Confidential Files, reproduced in Theoharis (1991), p. 342. Johnson famously said it was better to have Hoover "inside the tent pissing out, than outside the tent pissing in." Cited in The New York Times, 31 October 1971.
150 Sullivan (1979), pp. 36–37.
151 Personal and Confidential Letter from Special Agent in Charge in Los Angeles, Richard Hood, to Hoover, 22 February 1945, in Nichols' Official and Confidential Files, reproduced in Theoharis (1991), pp. 116–117. More documents are cited in Theoharis and Cox (1988), p. 264.

5

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND EVOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Introduction

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was established in the midst of the FBI's battle against the Truman administration. As the FBI engaged in subversion trying to remove Truman from the White House, the CIA was created by a bipartisan coalition as a politically neutral agency meant to operate only abroad. In the same country and roughly at the same time, a political intelligence agency engaged in subversion and a non-political intelligence agency was established. How can these radically different outcomes under nearly identical circumstances be explained?

The short answer is that, unlike the FBI, the CIA did not have, and has never had, a strong domestic subversive threat as one of its main enemies. This short chapter is the negative case study in my analysis, the one in which subversion did not occur. It explains how and why the absence of a strong subversive enemy led the CIA to be a non-political intelligence agency. Of course, the CIA did not always behave in accordance with the ideal type of the non-political intelligence agency, and I study some of these episodes here. I do not, however, study the occasional instances of politicization, as they have been thoroughly studied by other scholars.[1]

The next section offers a brief account of the origins and establishment of the CIA, looking at America's foreign intelligence from before World War Two to 1947. The third section illustrates who the CIA's principals were, what priorities they intended the Agency to have and shows that the CIA embodied the two traits of a non-political intelligence agency, political neutrality and a sharp foreign-domestic divide. The fourth section looks at some of the CIA's most controversial programs and argues that the degree of policymakers' control over the Agency has been high overall and that subversion never occurred. The fifth section concludes by comparing my explanation with alternative ones.

The origins of Central Intelligence

When World War Two broke out in Europe in September 1939, America did not have a foreign intelligence service to speak of. The intelligence community was a set of uncoordinated agencies, working under the State Department, the Army, the Navy and the Department of Justice.[2] None of these departments viewed foreign intelligence as a priority. In 1929 Secretary of State Stimson had closed the State Department's code-breaking Black Chamber, arguing that "gentlemen do not read each other's mail".[3] The collection of information was largely left in the hands of the regional desks, with wide lacunae and no coordination even within the department.[4] The Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) relied on naval attachés as its chief sources of information, but instructed them to shun the use of "dubious methods" in collecting intelligence.[5] Work in the Army's Military Intelligence Division (MID, also referred to as G-2) was seen by ambitious officers as a career killer. MID itself argued that the Army failed to understand the importance of intelligence before World War II.[6] As we have seen, Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation viewed its primary mission in terms of the fight against domestic subversion and law enforcement rather than foreign intelligence collection.

Former Assistant Attorney General William Donovan was appalled by the state of US intelligence and pushed for the creation of a central coordinating system. Donovan, a World War I hero who then joined the Republican Party and opposed the New Deal, was chosen by Roosevelt as his envoy on two trips to Europe and the Middle East in 1940 and early 1941, as part of Roosevelt's strategy to open his administration to the internationalist wing of the Republican Party. In April 1941, after returning from his second trip, Donovan wrote to the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, also a Republican working for a Democratic administration. Drawing on the lessons he had learned from the British intelligence services, Donovan argued that "intelligence operations should not be controlled by party exigencies".[7] America needed to set up a coordinator of all intelligence activities, "appointed by the President directly responsible to him and to no one else", in "sole charge of intelligence work abroad", coordinating the information collected by the military attachés and interpreting the information for the president.[8]

In June 1941 Roosevelt nominated Donovan Coordinator of Information, overcoming the objections of the military intelligence services.[9] Donovan, with the crucial help of the British intelligence agent William Stephenson,[10] quickly expanded his own organization, to the point of having more than 1,800 men less than a year later, dealing with research and analysis, intelligence collection, propaganda and sabotage operations.[11]

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 painfully displayed the inadequacy of US intelligence and the need for reform. America's entrance into the war led the newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff to demand that Donovan's organization be placed under their control. In wartime, the Chiefs argued, it was inconceivable to have a civilian organization operating independently on the battlefront. Roosevelt accepted the Chiefs' view and issued a Military Order in June 1942, transforming the office of the Coordinator of Information into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).[12]

Now under the military, Donovan lost his previous ready access to the president but increased the pace of covert operations, from sabotage to training guerrillas, and the reach of his secret agents, who were nonetheless barred from operating in Latin America or the Pacific theatre. Donovan's position remained fragile, however. The OSS was a wartime agency with no peacetime statutory basis. As the end of the war seemed in sight, a fierce battle over the OSS's future erupted.

In November 1944 Donovan proposed a plan for a central intelligence service directly under the president, with an advisory board composed of the secretaries of State, War and Navy. This service would have had "no police or law-enforcement functions either at home and abroad". It would have coordinated the work of the intelligence community, collected, analyzed and disseminated information throughout the government, handled subversive operations abroad and conducted "such other functions and duties relating to intelligence as the president may from time to time direct".[13]

Donovan's plan was very similar to what ultimately became the CIA, but was initially defeated. Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945 deprived Donovan of his most valuable asset in the bureaucratic fight.[14] Opposed by the Army, the Navy, the State Department, the FBI and the Bureau of the Budget, and with a president who understood little about intelligence and who was eager to dismantle wartime agencies, the OSS was liquidated with a presidential directive in September 1945. The OSS's Research and Analysis unit and its clandestine collection and counter-intelligence branches, both much diminished in size, were relocated to the State Department and War Department respectively.[15] The OSS's capacity to conduct subversive operations abroad was abandoned.[16]

President Truman nonetheless believed that some form of coordination of the intelligence community was necessary. He first asked Secretary of State Byrnes to develop a plan.[17] After some delay, the State Department proposed a complex coordinating-mechanism under the Secretary of State, but failed to convince Truman and his advisers.[18] Truman preferred instead a plan developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[19] The Chiefs had now persuaded themselves of the need for a Central Intelligence Agency with a director appointed by the president, but they put it firmly under a National Intelligence Authority composed of the secretaries of State, War and Navy and a JCS representative.

Using the JCS plan as his blueprint, in January 1946 Truman established the National Intelligence Authority. Serving this Authority was the newly created Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), who in turn headed the Central Intelligence Group (CIG).[20] The DCI's responsibilities were extensive: evaluating and disseminating national-level intelligence (i.e. the intelligence that did not fall within the purview of the departments), coordinating the national-level activities of the intelligence organizations within the three departments, providing services of common concern best accomplished centrally and fulfilling other unspecified duties as may be directed by the National Intelligence Authority.[21] Nonetheless, the status of the CIG as an independent agency was still in doubt. At its first meeting the National Intelligence Authority clarified that the CIG "shall be considered, organized and operated as a cooperative interdepartmental activity".[22]

The second Director of Central Intelligence, Lt. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, managed to expand his organization's reach. Under Vandenberg's tenure from June 1946 to May 1947, the CIG gained an independent budget and workforce, absorbed the clandestine operatives which from the OSS had been sent to the War Department and wrested control of Latin America away from the FBI. Vandenberg also pushed for a congressional authorization, which transformed the Central Intelligence Group into the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and gave it bureaucratic independence.[23]

The CIA was established by the National Security Act of 1947.[24] Intelligence was a minor portion of a bill which merged the Army and Navy departments into the Department of Defense, created the National Security Council and established an independent Air Force. This was Congress's first intervention in the debate over centralized intelligence, but it largely restated what had already been decided at the executive level. The intelligence portion of the National Security Act merely transformed into law the presidential directive which had established the CIG, spelling out that the Agency had no internal security functions (which was already stated in the original directive) and that the director could be both a civilian and a military.[25]

The CIA's main functions were vaguely stated as correlating, evaluating and disseminating national security intelligence. There was no explicit mention of the CIA's role in the clandestine collection of information nor in covert action. However, the CIA was assigned the duty "to perform such other functions and duties (…) as the National Security Council may from time to time direct".[26] Apart from some isolated accusatory cries of the creation of a Gestapo, congressmen accepted the need for a centralized foreign intelligence service under the president and made no formal provisions for their own oversight of the Agency, leaving it to informal agreements between congressional leaders and the Agency itself.[27]

A non-political intelligence agency

From its inception, the CIA closely resembled a non-political intelligence agency. It was established by a bipartisan coalition that did not view domestic subversives as one of its priorities. It espoused political neutrality and only operated abroad.

Until 1947, the creation of a foreign intelligence service was a process confined within the executive branch. The main actors were the State Department, the Army, the Navy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Bureau of the Budget, the White House and, of course, William Donovan and the organizations under his command. The disputes among these organizations were fierce, yet they were bureaucratic rather than political. The creation of the CIA was in fact a remarkably bipartisan process. It occurred under two Democratic presidents, the last of which had dubious prospects for re-election. A number of Republican figures played a decisive role, and the bill establishing the CIA was approved by a Republican-controlled Congress.

Most prominently, William Donovan was a life-long Republican. He almost became Attorney General for the Republican Herbert Hoover in 1929, he unsuccessfully ran as the Republican candidate for governor of New York in 1932, he

successfully argued a case against Roosevelt in the Supreme Court in 1937, and even after his experience as head of the OSS he considered running for the Senate as a Republican.[28] His biggest supporter within Roosevelt's cabinet was the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, who had been the Republican vice-presidential candidate in 1936. The personnel selection was at times deliberately intended to appeal to both parties. For instance, the second Director of the Central Intelligence Group, Lt. General Hoyt Vandenberg, was chosen in part because he was the nephew of the powerful Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg, soon to be the head of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, whose support for the legislation to establish the CIA was desired.[29]

The National Security Act was passed by the first Republican-controlled Congress since 1932, the one Truman labeled as the "do-nothing Congress" in his 1948 campaign. Yet the bill establishing the CIA passed with remarkably little controversy in the summer of 1947. The Senate Armed Services Committee passed the bill unanimously, making only one minor change on the intelligence portion,[30] and the Senate as whole approved it by voice vote with nearly no debate.[31] Passage in the House was slightly more controversial, with a few amendments that largely spelled out what was already stated in the presidential directive. The bill was passed 4–3 by a subcommittee of the House Expenditures Committee, with the three Democrats joining the Republican chairman. The entire House then passed the bill by voice vote.[32]

The CIA's principals agreed that the Agency's priority was going to be the fight against the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Indeed, this point was so obvious that it barely needed to be stated in public. Neither the National Security Act nor the congressional debate explicitly mentioned the Soviet Union as the CIA's main target.[33] Yet, by the summer of 1947 it was widely acknowledged that the US and the Soviet Union had become fierce rivals. The initial hesitation of the Roosevelt administration to target the Soviet Union was long gone. The CIA's creation was part of the reorganization of the national security apparatus intended to shoulder America's newly found responsibilities in what was starting to be known as the Cold War.

In secret documents, American policymakers were much more explicit about who the CIA's main target was. For instance, on 17 December 1947 the NSC instructed the CIA to conduct covert psychological operations because of "the vicious psychological efforts of the USSR, its satellite countries and Communist groups".[34] The first reports that Truman asked the CIG to produce were on the Soviet Union,[35] including the first estimate by the Office of Reports and Estimates,[36] and the overwhelming majority of the reports produced by the CIA in its early years dealt with the Soviet Union and the international communist movement.[37]

More importantly, a strong domestic subversive group was not among the main enemies of the CIA or of its predecessors, the OSS and the CIG. Most of those who created these organizations did not believe that the US was facing a domestic subversive group that posed a significant threat of overthrowing the government. In his last years in office, Roosevelt never seems to have expressed any concern that a domestic group posed a threat of overthrowing the US government.

Truman more explicitly said that he did not have such concerns, once remarking in 1947 that he was "not worried about the Communist Party taking over the government of the United States (…). I am not worried about this country ever going Communist. We have too much sense for that."[38]

As we have seen, this different perception of the severity of the communist threat was in part responsible for the disagreements between the Truman administration and Hoover's FBI. Of course, some in Congress and across the government's bureaucracy, certainly within the FBI and possibly even within the CIA, believed that communists and radicals in America posed a significant subversive threat. Nonetheless, everyone in Washington agreed that it was not the CIA's job to fight domestic subversion and that the CIA should not have operated domestically. In other words, regardless of whether they believed that a strong subversive threat existed, the CIA's principals agreed that fighting domestic subversion was not part of the CIA's tasks.

Having no subversive priority, the CIA resembled the ideal type of a non-political intelligence agency. Despite some instances of politicization, the CIA always proclaimed its political neutrality and largely acted accordingly. With some exceptions, it generally respected its statutory ban on domestic operations.

The political neutrality of the agency was never a matter of contention and was stated from the very beginning. In his letter to Knox in April 1941, when he first expressed the desirability of a foreign intelligence service, Donovan's first consideration was that "intelligence operations should not be controlled by party exigencies".[39] The point was taken for granted by all those who participated in the establishment of the CIA. Those who raised it, who were mainly but not exclusively those few who opposed the CIA, often did so by expressing their opposition to the establishment of a Gestapo.[40] The Nazi secret police was seen as the embodiment of everything the CIA was not supposed to be: it served the interests of a single party and it operated both at home and abroad.

Political neutrality has always been part of the CIA's bureaucratic culture. The concept is generally expressed in terms of the preservation of the agency's objectivity, which has to be defended from both political pressures and from bureaucratic interests. This concern for objectivity was one of the CIA's founding principles. For instance, when the CIA's predecessor, the CIG, first had to define "strategic and national policy intelligence", it included the specification that it "must be objective".[41] Shortly afterwards, Sherman Kent, widely considered to be the founding father of the CIA's analytical branch, summed up what remains the CIA's guiding principle in its relationship to policy: "Intelligence must be close enough to policy, plans and operations to have the greatest amount of guidance, and must not be so close that it loses its objectivity and integrity of judgment."[42] To this day, the CIA's standing rests on its political neutrality and on its capacity to inform policymakers in a way that is "objective" and "independent from political considerations".[43] CIA officers are instructed to "perform their work without regard to their private views and 'call it as they see it'".[44] Their professional commitment must be the assessment of national security issues "without bias for or against the outcomes sought by the incumbent presidential administration".[45]

The CIA also embodied the second trait of the non-political intelligence agency, operating abroad but not at home. Proponents of a central intelligence agency all agreed that it was not supposed to play an internal security function. This point was often repeated in the documents discussing a peacetime intelligence agency, becoming increasingly clear as the war came to a close. Donovan's letter to Knox in April 1941 proposed an agency in "charge of intelligence work *abroad*".[46] His plan of November 1944 specified that the agency "shall have no police or law-enforcement functions, either at home or abroad".[47] Writing to the director of the Bureau of the Budget a month before the OSS was liquidated, Donovan added that the agency he proposed "should be prohibited from carrying on clandestine activities within the United States" and that it should be authorized to conduct espionage, counterespionage and other special operations "in the foreign field only".[48]

Truman's directive establishing the CIG specified that "no police, law enforcement or internal security functions shall be exercised under this directive", as did the JCS plan upon which it was based.[49] The initial version of the intelligence section of the National Security Act merely referred to this directive, without making explicit the territorial limits on the CIA's operations. Several congressmen questioned the strength of this implicit limitation, thus the House decided to spell out what was called the anti-Gestapo provision, specifying that the CIA had "no police, subpoena, law-enforcement powers or domestic security functions". All but subpoena were explicitly stated in Truman's directive. By clarifying that the CIA was "strictly" confined to "the field of secret foreign intelligence", supporters of the bill were able to reassure those who feared the creation of a Gestapo.[50] The rationale behind the anti-Gestapo provision was simple: without the power to operate domestically, it would have been much harder for the CIA to intervene in domestic politics and to infringe on the rights of American citizens.

This argument was sound and, to a large extent, the past seventy years have proved it to be correct. Indeed, the CIA is the closest example one can find of a non-political intelligence agency. Nonetheless, as the next section shows, the CIA sometimes strayed from this ideal type, conducting domestic operations that had a political undertone, but generally did so at the request of its principals.

Principals' control and the CIA's domestic operations

In late 1974 the *New York Times* revealed that under President Nixon the CIA had illegally engaged in large-scale domestic spying on anti-war protesters.[51] The first reaction of many in Washington was to say that the CIA was out of control. The Senate and the House soon created two investigative committees, generally referred to as the Church and the Pike Committee, respectively.[52] Before the first public hearing, Democratic senator Frank Church privately described the purpose of his committee in these words: "We must focus on abuses. That's what this committee is for: to investigate wrongdoing. We need to begin hearings with something dramatic."[53] True to his word, during his first public hearing Church

displayed a CIA poison dart gun, meant to show that the Agency had violated a presidential order by maintaining stocks of poison. Believing that such violations were widespread, Church called the CIA a "rogue elephant rampaging out of control".[54]

Church was planning to use the findings of his committee as a platform for his presidential candidacy, which he announced halfway through the investigation.[55] He thus had all the incentives to overstate that the CIA was "out of control". Unfortunately for his presidential aspirations, in the final report he was forced to admit that that was not the case:

> The Committee found that in general the President has had, through the National Security Council, effective means for exerting broad policy control over at least two major clandestine activities – covert action and sensitive technical collection. (…) The Central Intelligence Agency, in broad terms, is not 'out of control'.[56]

The Church Committee concluded that

> the CIA has not been free (…) to carry out covert action as it sees fit. (…) [O] n the whole, the Agency has been responsive to internal and external review and authorization requirements. (…) At the same time, the Committee notes that approval outside the Agency does not solve all problems since the NSC committees have approved (and in some cases *initiated*) projects that involved highly improper practices or were inconsistent with declared foreign policies.[57]

The Pike Committee followed a similar trajectory. Democratic representative Otis Pike was initially convinced that the CIA was an out-of-control rogue elephant, as Church had described it, and his relationship with the CIA was rocky from the start.[58] After their investigations, however, Pike and his colleagues came to the conclusion that "far from being out of control", the CIA had been "utterly responsive to the instructions of the President and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs".[59] The Committee did not spare critiques in its judgments: it found that covert actions "were irregularly approved, sloppily implemented, and, at times, had been forced on a reluctant CIA by the President and his national security advisers." Nonetheless, on the point of control Pike made a sharp turnaround, publicly stating that "the CIA does not go galloping off conducting operations by itself (…). The major things which are done are not done unilaterally by the CIA without approval from higher up the line."[60]

Scholars and practitioners confirm the findings of the Pike and Church committees. The consensus is that, to this day, the White House has exercised a high degree of control over the CIA.[61] Far from being out of control, the CIA has been responsive to policymakers' instructions. Indeed, most of the CIA's ethically and legally controversial programs were a result of too much control, not too little, as the CIA agreed to obey to policymakers' instructions even when these instructions should have been rejected as illegal or improper.

The biggest and most controversial of the CIA's domestic operations, and the one revealed by *The New York Times* in late 1974, began in 1967, when President Lyndon Johnson asked the CIA's director Richard Helms to find proof of what he believed was the connection between the anti-war protesters in America and foreign communists in Moscow and Beijing. Helms later defended himself saying that he reminded Johnson that the CIA was barred from domestic spying.[62] Johnson replied that he was "quite aware of that", but, as he added later that year, he was "not going to let the Communists take this government and they're doing it right now".[63] Complying with Johnson's demand, but in violation of the law and of the CIA's own charter, Helms began a domestic surveillance operation that a year later was codenamed Chaos. As rumors of the initially highly secret operation started to spread within the Agency, many officers protested, but they could not reverse Helms' decision to follow the president's instructions. The CIA never found any evidence that the anti-war protesters "act[ed] under any direction other than their own", and said this to Johnson.[64]

Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon, was also convinced of the existence of a worldwide communist conspiracy trying to overthrow the government. Three days into his presidency, Nixon asked the CIA to conduct a study of "communist factors in youth disturbance". Helms struggled to convince that there was no communist conspiracy behind the anti-war movement and the student protests. Partly in a vain attempt to convince the president that there was no such conspiracy and partly under the instructions of Henry Kissinger, Helms extended Operation Chaos and other domestic surveillance operations to gather even more intelligence on the supposed link between Moscow and the American protesters.

There is no written presidential order asking the CIA to spy on domestic dissidents, presumably because both Johnson and Nixon knew better than to put such orders in writing, but the consensus in the literature and the available documentary evidence leave no doubt that the CIA reluctantly engaged in domestic spying under instructions from the White House.[65] In accordance with subversion paradox theory, the biggest violation of the ban on domestic activities occurred under the White House's instructions when two successive presidents perceived that a domestic political subversive group with international support posed a plausible threat of overthrowing the government. The CIA reluctantly complied with the presidents' requests, and strived to convince its own principals that no such threat existed.

Another controversial episode is the CIA's involvement in the Watergate scandal. The break-in at the Watergate was supervised by Howard Hunt, a twenty-one-years veteran of the Agency, and among the burglars were James McCord, who had spent nineteen years at Langley, and several Cuban exiles who the CIA had contracted for the Bay of Pigs invasion. They were all part of the White House Special Investigative Unit, better known as the "plumbers", a secret unit formed by the Nixon White House in 1971 whose initial purpose was to investigate and prevent national security leaks. Following the instructions of the White House, the CIA collaborated with Hunt and the plumbers from late July to late August 1971, providing them with cameras, bugging equipment, disguises, fake identification documents, and

the psychological profile of Daniel Ellsberg, who had leaked the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War. It then broke off any collaboration when it started suspecting that the plumbers' operations were going beyond merely going after leaks and "could involve the Agency in operations outside its proper functions".[66]

After the arrest of the Watergate burglars, Nixon tried to enlist the CIA in the cover-up.[67] At first, DCI Helms and his deputy, Vernon Walters, seemed to follow Nixon's instructions, asking the FBI's acting director, Patrick Gray, to limit the Watergate inquiry to avoid revealing national security secrets.[68] However, they soon realized that Nixon was trying to lay the Watergate scandal at the CIA's feet and refused to collaborate, inducing Nixon to fire Helms.[69] As with Operation Chaos, the CIA got involved in Watergate because it was too compliant with White House demands. It stopped complying once it realized that the plumbers did far more than investigating national security leaks and had turned into an instrument of domestic political warfare.

In other instances the CIA acted against the law and failed to inform the president about it. For instance, for twenty years starting in the early 1950s the CIA ran a mail-opening program meant to intercept mail exchanged between the US and the Soviet Union. The program was a clear violation of federal statutes that prohibited mail-tampering. It was never officially put through the CIA's formal approval process, but it received the blessing of the then DCI Allen Dulles. Dulles did not inform President Eisenhower of this program, most likely to ensure the president could plausibly deny knowing about it in case it was ever revealed. No president was ever informed of the CIA's program while it was in place, and even Dulles' successor as DCI, John McCone, was not aware of it. Overall, however, the historical evidence, as well as the consensus of historians and practitioners, indicate that the mail-opening program was a rare exception to the strong control that presidents have exercised over the CIA.

The fact that the CIA never engaged in subversion, as all the available evidence indicates, is more evidence of that strong control. The scholarly community, including those most critical towards the Agency, is unanimous in this regard. Indeed, most scholars don't even bother to address the question, given how obvious it seems.

Only once did a CIA's principal accuse the Agency of having conspired against him. Richard Nixon believed throughout his political career that the CIA had been "out to get him".[70] Nixon's mistrust for what he called "those clowns out there at Langley"[71] dated at least from the 1960 presidential campaign. He believed that the CIA had conspired to cause his defeat against Kennedy. Nixon's belief was based on a briefing by DCI Allen Dulles to the then-presidential candidate Kennedy in August 1960. In this briefing, Dulles did not respond to Kennedy's question on America's standing "in the missile race", arguing that the Defense Department "was the competent authority on this question".[72] Kennedy continued to speak of the missile gap on his campaign, ultimately winning the election. Nixon was informed of this briefing and viewed Dulles' avoidance of the answer as a deliberate withholding of information aimed at causing his own defeat.[73]

Nixon's accusation is universally dismissed.[74] Dulles's avoidance of Kennedy's question can be easily explained as the desire to avoid a politically controversial topic. In any case, inferring from it that the CIA was trying to cause Nixon's defeat seems absurd. Scholars agree that Nixon's belief was indeed absurd and some explain it as the result of his pathologically conspiratorial mindset.[75] A less pathological but similarly speculative explanation is that Nixon's involvement in the FBI's attempt to remove Truman from office in 1948 induced him to believe that US intelligence agencies were inclined to intervene in electoral campaigns. If the FBI did so, why couldn't the "Ivy League liberals" at the CIA do the same?

Conclusion

My explanation for the absence of subversion is that the CIA was a politically neutral intelligence agency, banned from operating domestically and under the control of policymakers in the White House. In other words, the founding features of the CIA immunized it from the problem of subversion.

Alternative explanations also predict that the CIA should not have engaged in subversion. First, the bureaucratic grievance model predicts that the Agency should have been more likely to subvert when its budget or turf were threatened. Although the CIA did go through some painful cuts, especially late in the Nixon administration and after the Cold War, the overall trend has been one of budget increases. Second, according to the logic of coup proofing, the CIA is unlikely to subvert because it is just one of many intelligence agencies within the intelligence community. Despite its central position, the CIA has always struggled to coordinate the rest of the American intelligence community. The coordination that the CIA could not achieve over, for instance, intelligence analysis would have been even harder to achieve for a successful subversive attempt. Third, subversion is less likely to occur in countries with a high GDP per capita, and the US has of course been one of the wealthiest countries on Earth throughout the CIA's existence.

The lack of subversion by the CIA would thus seem to be overdetermined, and therefore not a probing test for my theory. However, in the same apparently overdetermined circumstances the FBI engaged in subversion. Under very similar conditions, an agency that was initially designed to fight a significant subversive threat behaved subversively, whereas its non-political counterpart did not. Alternative explanations cannot explain this, but subversion paradox theory can.

Notes

1 See, among others, Ransom (2008), Pillar (2010), Rovner (2011) and Bar Joseph (2013).
2 The literature is unanimous on this point. See Troy (1981), ch. 2, Andrew (1995), ch. 3, Jeffreys-Jones (1989), p. 14, Ranelagh (1988), p. 40.
3 For an extensive discussion of this quote, see Kruh (1988).
4 Troy (1981), pp. 6–7.
5 Ibidem, p. 8.
6 Ibidem, p. 9.

7 Reproduced in part in Troy (1981), p. 417, dated 26 April 1941.
8 Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 419–420.
9 Roosevelt's order is available at www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/pdf/v37i3a10p.pdf, Document 1 and discussed extensively in Troy (1981), p. 42 and pp. 65–69.
10 Troy (1981), pp. 57–59, 80–84, and Andrew (1995), pp. 93–97. Donovan would later remark that "Bill Stephenson taught us everything we knew about foreign intelligence operations", cited in Troy (1981), p. 83.
11 Troy (1981), pp. 80–88, and Rudgers (2000), p. 10.
12 Available at www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/pdf/v37i3a10p.pdf, Document 2. See also Monje (2008), pp. 1–2 and Troy (1981), p. 427.
13 Donovan's plan is available at www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/Donovan_plan_to_establish_central_intelligence_authority_18_Nov_1944.pdf. See also Troy (1981), p. 445, and Monje (2008), pp. 2–3.
14 Roosevelt's position on post-war intelligence remains an enigma. On one side Roosevelt gave access to Donovan and repeatedly expressed his support for the OSS's mission, to the point that Donovan himself believed that Roosevelt's death had negatively sealed the OSS's fate. On the other side, a series of negative press reports on the OSS in early 1945 were later described by the journalist who wrote them as based on leaks from Roosevelt's personal secretary. The reliability of this account has never been confirmed, however. See Rudgers (2000), pp. 30–32, Troy (1981), pp. 261–265, Immerman (2014), pp. 11–12, and Ranelagh (1988), pp. 96–97.
15 Executive Order 9621, 20 September 1945, "Termination of the Office of Strategic Services and Disposition of Its Functions". See also Troy (1981), pp. 461–2.
16 Warren (1994) pp.xii-xiii and Troy (1981), p. 314.
17 Letter from Truman to Byrnes concerning the development of a foreign intelligence program, 20 September 1945. Reproduced in Troy (1981), p. 463.
18 "Memorandum for Commander Clifford" by Sidney Souers on 27 December 1945. Reproduced in Warren (1994), p. 17.
19 The plan JCS1181/5 of 18 September 1945 (and later amended) is available at www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80B01676R002500050006-6.pdf. See also Troy (1981), p. 459.
20 The directive is available at www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/pdf/v37i3a10p.pdf, Document 5. The composition of the National Intelligence Authority was slightly different from what the JCS had proposed. The JCS representative was replaced by a personal representative of the president. See also Troy (1981), pp. 464–465 and Garthoff (2005), p. 12.
21 See especially Garthoff (2005), pp. 12–13.
22 The directive is reproduced in Warner (1994), pp. 35–37.
23 The literature is unanimous on the importance of Vandenberg's directorship. See Troy (1981), pp. 359–363, Ranelagh (1988), pp. 108–109, Warren (1994), pp. xiv–xv, Garthoff (2005), p. 16 and p. 23, Weiner (2007), pp. 16–17, and Immerman (2014), pp. 16–18.
24 The intelligence portions of the National Security Act are reproduced in Troy (1981) pp.471–472.
25 Zegart (1999), pp.172–174 and 181–182, strongly argues that Congress' contribution was minimal. Barrett (2005) most forcefully argues that Congress played a more important role in overseeing the early CIA than generally believed. Nonetheless, even he acknowledges that "the CIA figured little in the (Congressional) debate" in 1947, that the bill passed by Congress differed little from what the executive had already decided and that oversight was weak in the late 1940s and grew progressively stronger only in the 1950s. See pp. 9–10, 22–24 and 459.
26 Reproduced in Monje (2008), pp. 3–5. See also Troy (1981), pp. 471–472.
27 The passage of the intelligence portion of the bill through Congress is recounted extensively in Troy (1981), pp. 377–402, and Barrett (2005), pp. 9–24.

28 Troy (1981), pp. 23–27.
29 Troy (1981), p. 359, Warren (1994), p. xiv and Immerman (2014), p. 15.
30 Troy (1981), p. 385. The change provided for the appointment of the DCI "from the armed services or from civilian life", which was already implicit in the original proposal.
31 Troy (1981), p. 396. Only one senator, Robertson of Wyoming, expressed his dissent from a bill which he thought was creating "a vast military empire". He quickly realized the futility of his effort and gave up.
32 Troy (1981), pp. 393–400.
33 This should not surprise us. Even the Truman doctrine speech uses the word "Communism" or derivatives only once, and never mentions the Soviet Union.
34 NSC4-A, December 17, 1947. Reproduced in Warner (1994), pp. 173–175.
35 Letter from Clark Clifford to Admiral Leahy, 18 July 1946, reproduced in CIA (2009), p. 33.
36 CIG, Office of Reports and Estimates, ORE1/1, "Revised Soviet Tactics in International Affairs", 6 January 1947. Reproduced in Warren (1994), pp. 99–104.
37 See for instance the selection in Warren (1994) and in Monje (2008).
38 Truman's news conference, 3 April 1947. Reproduced in Truman (1963), p. 191. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4728447.1947.001/231?page=root;rgn=full+text;size=100;view=image
39 Letter from Donovan to Know, 26 April 1941. Reproduced in part in Troy (1981), pp. 417–418.
40 The word "Gestapo" recurred frequently in the congressional debate. Even before that, it was used by an anti-OSS press campaign, likely based on leaks from the FBI and from Army intelligence. See Troy (1981), pp. 255–260, 391–395.
41 Records of the National Intelligence Authority's ninth meeting, on 12 February 1947. Reproduced in Warner (1994,) pp. 113–121.
42 Kent (1951), p. 180. Of course, as discussed in the introduction, finding the optimal position for intelligence, the one that is neither too close nor too far, remains a matter of dispute.
43 See the Intelligence Community Directive 203, Analytic Standards, January 2015, which applies to the entire intelligence community, not just to the CIA. https://fas.org/irp/dni/icd/icd-203.pdf
44 Simon (2013), p. 648.
45 Davis (2006), p. 999.
46 Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 417–418. Emphasis added.
47 Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 445–447.
48 Donovan to Harold Smith, 25 August 1945. Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 455–458. See also www.cia.gov/library/publications/historical-collection-publications/creation-of-ic-founding-documents/creation-of-the-intelligence-community.pdf, pp. 29–31.
49 Reproduced in Troy (1981), pp. 464–465 and 459–460.
50 Troy (1981), pp. 393–397.
51 Hersh, Seymour "Huge C.I.A. Operation Reported in U.S. Against Antiwar Forces, Other Dissidents in Nixon Years", *The New York Times*, 22 December 1974.
52 Snider (2008) p.37–38. The House first created a committee led by Representative Nedzi. Nedzi had been a member of the Armed Services' subcommittee handling CIA affairs, however, and was quickly portrayed as a co-opted congressman. In July 1975, the House reconstituted the investigating committee under Otis Pike.
53 Cited in Andrew (1995), p. 414. Church was speaking to one of his staffers.
54 US Senate (1976) *Hearings on Unauthorized Storage of Toxic* Agents. See also Snider (2008), p. 36 and www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Church_Committee_Created.htm.
55 Snider (2008), p. 36.
56 US Senate (1976), *Foreign and Military Intelligence*, Book I, p. 427. www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94755_I.pdf
57 Ibidem, p. 447.

58 Snider (2008), pp. 38–39, and Haines (1998/1999).
59 Cited in Andrew, p. 404, and in Haines (1998/1999).
60 Quoted in Haines (1998/1999).
61 This consensus includes harsh critics of the CIA such as Weiner (2007), p. 351, and Prados (2014), pp. 318–319. See also Ranelagh (1988), pp. 599–600, Jeffreys-Jones (1989), p. 208 and p. 221, Andrew (1995), p. 404, Barrett (2005), p. 461, Bruneau and Boraz (2007), p. 332, and Lundberg (2010), p. 76.
62 Helms (2003), pp. 279–280.
63 Cited in Weiner (2007), pp. 285–287.
64 Ibidem. See also Prados (2014), p. 42, Hathaway and Smith (1993), pp. 14–17, Theoharis (2006), p. 175, and Dujmovic (2007).
65 See the reports of both the Rockefeller and the Church committees in US Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States (1975), pp. 130–131, and US Senate (1976), Book III p. 681, Ranelagh (1988), pp. 534–535, Jeffreys-Jones (1989), pp. 157–160, Hathaway and Smith (1993), pp. 14–15, Andrew (1995), p. 354, Weiner (2007), pp. 294–295, Monje (2008), p. 91, and Prados (2014), pp. 8–42. Even Prados, arguably one of the most critical historians of the CIA and of its director, argues that DCI Helms "took a presidential concern and turned it into a CIA program." He recognizes the importance of "presidential demands", but adds that "the question of their legality continues to intrude. CIA officers take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States, not the power of a chief executive, whether Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon."
66 DCI Colby's testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Intelligence Operations (9 May 1973), as reproduced in a message from Colby to Ambassador Helms, 10 May 1973, CIA Reading Room. See the other messages exchanged by Colby and Helms on 5 May and 11 May. www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/73_1499564.pdf
67 Nixon's effort was recorded in what became known as the "smoking gun tape". See the partial reproduction in Monje (2008), pp. 156–159.
68 See Walters' recollection, reproduced in Monje (2008), pp. 159–161. Walters told Gray on 23 June 1972 that the FBI's investigation may have jeopardized some of the CIA's covert activities, but then reversed himself three days later in a conversation with the White House counsel John Dean. On 6 July he told Gray that no CIA sources could be jeopardized by the FBI's investigations.
69 For a similar interpretation of the CIA's role in the Watergate scandal, see Monje (2008), pp. 153–159, Olmsted (2006), pp. 198–201, Weiner (2007), pp. 318–323, Turner (2014), p. 280, Immerman (2014), p. 94, Jeffreys-Jones (1989), p. 190, Robarge (2008), p. 19.
70 Weiner (2007), p. 323.
71 Weiner (2007), ch. 28.
72 Quoted in Jeffreys-Jones (1989), p. 115.
73 Ibidem. See also Helms' testimony in the CIA's internal history of his directorship, Hathaway and Smith (1993), p. 10.
74 See, for instance, Jeffreys-Jones (1989), pp. 114–115, Ranelagh (1988), pp. 484–485, Hathaway and Smith (1993), p. 9, Andrew (1995), p. 386 and Immermann (2014), p. 88.
75 Andrew (1995), p. 386.

6

ITALIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, 1943–1964

From 1943 to 1964 the main enemy of Italy's military intelligence agency was the Italian Communist Party, a more than plausible subversive threat. As subversion paradox theory predicts, Italian military intelligence closely resembled the ideal type of a political intelligence agency. It was not politically neutral and it operated both at home and abroad. It was poorly controlled by its principals, and it engaged in subversion in 1960 and in 1964.

My analysis stops in 1964, even though intelligence agencies from the late 1960s to the early 1980s are most often characterized as out of control, repeatedly plotting coups and planning terrorist attacks in an attempt to scare the population away from leftist parties.[1] This later period would have been an easier and more extreme case for subversion paradox theory, but by studying the earlier period I can examine the re-establishment of the military intelligence service during and after World War Two and thus understand how and why the bases for a political intelligence agency were set. Furthermore, sources become rarer and less reliable the closer we get to the present. To follow the history of the Italian secret services beyond 1964 would have meant embarking on a perilous trip through hardly accessible court documents, repeated attempts at disinformation and murky links between the intelligence services and extremist groups on both the right and the left.

My reconstruction of the events up to 1964 challenges some long-standing interpretations on both sides of the historiographical debate. Scholars, especially those on the left, have repeatedly argued that the Italian intelligence services were little more than servants of their American counterparts and that American control over them was all but total. Italian intelligence officers were strongly right wing, thinly disguising their fascist sympathies, and they ostracized everything leftist, whether it was the Communist Party or the entrance of the Socialist Party in the government. According to this interpretation, even when Italian intelligence acted against the Italian government's wishes, it did so not because it was "deviant" but

because it followed the orders of its patrons across the Atlantic, to whom it owed its primary loyalty.[2] Although the American and, to a lesser extent, the British government exercised a strong influence over the creation and evolution of Italy's military intelligence agency, I argue that the agency was not under the control of any of its principals and that it repeatedly disobeyed the American government. Furthermore, the agency actively promoted the participation of the Socialist Party in government from roughly 1960 to late 1963. On the opposite side of the spectrum we find those who bemoan the tendency of their colleagues to see conspiracies everywhere.[3] This literature lumps together in an undiscerning cauldron implausible conspiracy theories with well documented episodes of subversion, undermining the credibility of both. Against this strand of the literature I argue that Italy's military intelligence engaged in subversion twice in less than twenty years.

The reader unfamiliar with this is likely to get lost in the maze of Italian politics. I thus begin by providing a brief historical account of Italian political history from 1943 to 1964. The rest of this chapter proceeds chronologically, following the three steps in my theoretical framework (see Figure 2.1). The second part corresponds to the first step in subversion paradox theory. It covers the reestablishment of Italian military intelligence from 1943 to 1949, identifying its principals and priorities and showing its resemblance to the ideal type of a political intelligence agency. The third part corresponds to the second step in subversion paradox theory and shows that, from 1949 to 1959, this political intelligence agency increasingly escaped from its principals' control. The fourth part explains the first episode of subversion in the summer of 1960. The fifth part tracks the agency's support for the center-left government until late 1963 and then studies the most famous episode of subversion, the 'Piano Solo' in the summer of 1964. The last part concludes by assessing the theory's performance and comparing it to alternative explanations.

Italian political history, 1943–1964

On 8 September 1943 the Italian military government of Marshall Pietro Badoglio announced its surrender to the Allies. The Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had been removed as head of the government on 25 July, and then arrested on the order of King Victor Emmanuel III. As Italians learned of the armistice on the radio, the king and the government fled from Rome, about to be overrun by German troops, and found refuge in Southern Italy under British and American protection.

Italy's war on Germany's side ended in defeat, but a new war, on the Allies' side, had already begun. On 29 September 1943, Marshall Badoglio and General Dwight Eisenhower signed the so-called Long Armistice, which reaffirmed Italy's unconditional surrender and placed the entire Italian government under the control of British and American forces.[4]

In June 1944 the Italian government was again in the hands of a civilian, supported by a coalition of all major anti-fascist parties, including the Italian Communist and

Socialist parties. This large coalition governed for three years, guiding the country through the war's end in April 1945 and the establishment of the Italian Republic in June 1946. In May 1947 Prime Minister and Christian Democratic leader Alcide De Gasperi chose to exclude the Communist and Socialist parties from the governing coalition. Italian voters confirmed De Gasperi's choice in the parliamentary elections in April 1948. Christian Democracy won 48.5% of the votes and an absolute majority of seats in parliament, far ahead of the 31% obtained by the Popular Front formed by the Communist and Socialist parties. Despite his absolute majority, De Gasperi chose to govern in a coalition with the small Republican, Social Democratic and Liberal parties, initiating a governing formula which, with minor modifications, continued for fifteen years. In 1949, De Gasperi's government joined the Atlantic Alliance, despite the strong opposition of the leftist parties and of parts of his own coalition.

The next elections in 1953 inaugurated a period of slow but steady polarization of the electorate, which continued despite more than a decade of rapid economic growth until the mid-1960s. Christian Democracy's share of the votes fell from 48.5% to 40%, whereas the extreme right and extreme left gained ground, with the Communist and Socialist parties increasing their combined vote share to slightly over 35%.[5] As the centrist governing parties grew weaker, many began to consider the enlargement of the governing majority to the Socialists, the so-called "opening to the left".[6] The Soviet Union's violent suppression of the Hungarian Revolt of 1956 strengthened this prospect, opening a rift between the Communist Party, which sided with the Soviets, and the Socialist Party, which condemned the Soviet intervention.

The 1958 elections strengthened the parties favorable to the opening to the left, with Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party making small gains at the ballot box. Several attempts to form a government not opposed by the Socialist Party failed however, inducing the Christian Democrat Fernando Tambroni to form in 1960 a government supported by the small neo-fascist party. Tambroni soon had to resign amid strong popular protests, finally enabling the creation of a series of governments supported by the Socialist Party in Parliament.

In the eyes of the proponents of the opening to the left, the 1963 elections were supposed to give popular legitimacy to the center-left governing formula. The opposite happened. Christian Democracy's share of the vote declined from 42% to 38%, whereas the Socialist Party roughly maintained its share. The real winners of the election seemed to be the center-left's opponents on the extreme left and right, first and foremost the Communist Party, which reached over 25%. Ironically, the increase in the vote share of the parties opposed to the opening to the left made the Socialist participation in the government nearly inevitable. As the parties on the extremes opposed to the center-left kept growing, so did the need to include the Socialists in government. In December 1963, the first so-called organic center-left government took office, with the Christian Democratic leader Aldo Moro as prime minister and the Socialist leader Pietro Nenni as his deputy.

The establishment of a political intelligence agency: Italian military intelligence, 1943–1949

After Italy surrendered in September 1943, the Anglo-American Allies re-established an Italian military intelligence agency under their control.[7] All intelligence operations required prior approval by the Allied commanders and the information the agency gathered was fed into the Allied chain of command. The archives of the Italian intelligence services, both military and civilian, were placed under British and American control.[8] The British and the Americans were thus among the principals of Italy's military intelligence, and at least at this stage they were in a more prominent position that the Italian government itself.

The priorities of Italy's military intelligence were twofold. The first was the fight against Nazi Germany and its remaining fascist allies. The second one was to control and contain the armed Resistance groups fighting against Germans and fascists in Northern Italy, especially communists and socialists. This second priority came naturally to the conservative monarchists who formed the overwhelming majority of Italy's military intelligence officers. Almost all of them had started their careers under Mussolini and had long identified communists, and more generally leftists, as enemies.[9] After the Armistice these officers had chosen to fight for the king rather than for Mussolini and his German ally. With the communists' strength reaching unprecedented heights in terms of military force and popular support, it was natural for many of them to engage in a renewed struggle against leftist subversives, even though they proved willing to collaborate with communist partisans throughout the war to get rid of the common fascist enemy.[10] Despite the solid tools of control in British and American hands, the relationship between the Italian and the Allied intelligence services during the war was tense. The Allies mistrusted their Italian counterparts, viewing them as right-wing monarchists out of sync with the rest of the population and tainted by their previous association with fascism.[11] In the words of one officer, Italian intelligence was "simply an outgrowth of the necessity of the previous regime to perpetuate itself by spying, intimidation and force"[12] and it had long played "a predominant Political rather than Military role".[13]

After the war was over, British and American officers debated whether to disband Italian military intelligence altogether. The lack of political neutrality of Italian military intelligence did not correspond to what they considered to be normatively sound and its products were widely seen as politicized. In the words of one officer, "[a] very large number of the reports and investigations into subversive activities carried out by the Italian intelligence service reveal a general right-wing bias."[14] The OSS counter-intelligence chief in Italy, James Jesus Angleton, similarly argued that

> [t]he [Italian intelligence] services have used every event, incident to the Italian Revolution, as propaganda material to indicate Russia's subversive intentions of preventing the reestablishment of 'law', 'order', and democracy in Italy. At no time have the various items of intelligence (when submitted to the test) been proven to be other than consciously composed for the purposes of provocation.[15]

Some Allied officers concluded that Italian intelligence had to "be abolished and replaced by an intelligence organisation to serve the State and uncontaminated by allegiance to any particular faction".[16] Ultimately, however, more senior officers decided that the costs in terms of lost coverage of the Italian left would have been too high and that "[t]he Italian system cannot be abruptly changed without a certain stoppage of coverage for a considerable time".[17] Given that "[t]he Italian Government has no national police force capable of countering espionage or subversion, of observing and reporting on the internal security situation," argued another G-2 officer, "(…) this is not the moment to disband this effective organization for such vague reasons as, 'tainted with Fascism', 'Monarchist', 'Rightist'."[18]

Allied officers decided instead to prolong their operational control over Italian intelligence as long as possible, in the belief that by exercising "close control and supervision" the Allies could "insure that IAI [Italian Army Intelligence] continues to function in the best interests of the Allies and of Italy, rather than any political party".[19] At the same time, Italy's military intelligence was prohibited from conducting espionage operations abroad and severely limited in terms of personnel.[20]

Despite the decisive role which British and American officers played in recreating Italian military intelligence, they understood the limitations of the tools they could use to control it. Italian military intelligence officers were

> certainly anti-Communist, and if only for this reason, favour the present occupying powers in Italy. As regards communism, reports have been exaggerated or unfounded, and it was formerly considered that a definite attempt to involve the Allies in opposition to Left-wing politics was the reason.[21]

This cooperation, however, was considered fragile.

> It is generally considered that CS [Italy's counter-espionage] is co-operating loyally because the security interests of the Italians coincide at present with those of the Allies (…) [and] because the threat of disorder comes chiefly from the extreme left (…). [It is] doubtful whether co-operation would be so satisfactory were any threat to security to develop from the extreme right.[22]

American and British intelligence officers understood the fragility of control based on political and ideological inclinations, as well as the tendency of a political intelligence agency to politicize its estimates.

It was only in the spring of 1949 that the Italian government formally re-established an autonomous intelligence service. By then, American-backed Christian Democracy had obtained a majority in parliament, formed an anti-communist government with the small Republican, Social Democratic and Liberal parties and joined the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The new government reorganized its entire intelligence community. In October 1948 the Ministry of the Interior created the Ufficio Affari Riservati (UAARR, Office of Reserved Affairs). UAARR's main priority was the fight against

communists and leftist parties in general, and its personnel was mainly composed of former officers of the fascist interior security service, OVRA.[23] Although I do not deal with UAARR in any detail here, its characteristics as well as its behavior are in line with my theoretical framework.[24]

The Ministry of Defense soon followed suit. With two internal directives in late March and early September 1949, Minister of Defense Randolfo Pacciardi, the leader of the Republican Party, established under his control the Information Service of the Armed Forces (Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate, SIFAR).

Many scholars believe that SIFAR was an American creation[25] and even more note that SIFAR was established at the same time as the Atlantic Alliance.[26] The evidence on SIFAR's creation is still scarce, but it is clear that the US government had a hierarchical relationship with SIFAR and should be included among its principals. For instance, the US government played an important role in granting security clearances and it was common practice for high-ranking Italian military and intelligence officers to require American approval before being nominated or removed.[27] Further, US intelligence strengthened their position vis-à-vis Italian intelligence by recruiting numerous agents. As early as 1946 James Jesus Angleton, head of US counterintelligence in Italy, had at least ten and possibly as many as fourteen informers within the Italian Naval Intelligence service,[28] and others within the civilian police service, the Pubblica Sicurezza.[29] He reportedly told his superiors in Washington that he had penetrated Italian intelligence so deeply that he practically ran it.[30]

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that SIFAR was an obedient servant of its overseas masters, and we will encounter numerous instances in which SIFAR disobeyed Washington's instructions. Already the time of SIFAR's creation, the CIA expressed several concerns about it. In June 1949 CIA analysts stated that "general apprehension is felt lest control of counter-espionage by the Carabinieri could result, as under Fascism, in the subversion of the military to political ends, and to an undue concentration of power in the Defense Ministry." The armed services, the prime minister and the foreign minister were against a unified military intelligence service, but Defense Minister Pacciardi was pushing vigorously in its favor, arousing "suspicion of the ultimate designs of the Pacciardi group". The CIA suspected that "one purpose of the unification may be to eliminate penetration made by the UK and the US into the Italian intelligence services".[31]

SIFAR was thus the result of the extensive collaboration but also competition between its principals, the Italian and the American governments. Despite their disagreements, both governments agreed that SIFAR's main enemy had to be the Italian Communist Party. They perceived communism as a significant subversive threat, at the time of SIFAR's creation and for decades to come. Whether via the ballot box or via an armed insurrection, the Italian and American governments viewed the threat posed by the Italian Communist Party as requiring urgent counter-subversive measures. The evidence is undisputed in this regard. For instance, the US National Security Council repeatedly referred to the threat of a communist takeover of Italy.[32] Similarly, the Italian government regularly made

and updated detailed plans for a legal handover of power to the military in case of a communist insurrection, and Italian intelligence regularly compiled reports on the Communist Party's subversive plans.[33]

As predicted by subversion paradox theory, SIFAR closely resembled the ideal type of the political intelligence agency. It was not politically neutral, as will be abundantly clear as we go along. For now, suffice to say that one of the first tasks that Defense Minister Pacciardi assigned to SIFAR was the removal from the armed forces of all those who had leftist sympathies.[34] Further, SIFAR operated both at home and abroad. SIFAR's task was defined as gathering and defending information for the benefit of the state, with no specified limitations on the kind of information it was supposed to gather and on where it could operate.[35] As noted by a former head of military counterintelligence,

> SIFAR should have directed the entire informational activity of the State (military, political, economic, etc.). (…) SIFAR was assigned the same informational duties of the Carabinieri and part of the informational duties of the Ministry of Interior and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[36]

Policymakers' increasingly weak control over SIFAR, 1949–1959

There is little evidence of principals' weak control over SIFAR until the mid-1950s. Scholars and practitioners agree that under the leadership of General Ettore Musco, head of SIFAR from 1952 to the end of 1955, SIFAR's political operations had been "limited to the control of the Communist Party's activities in all of its manifestations".[37] I cannot exclude that unauthorized activities occurred but remained secret, but a then classified investigation conducted in 1967 found that SIFAR's improper activities began after Musco had left.[38]

The most likely explanation for why SIFAR under Musco did not disobey its principals is that Musco and other senior SIFAR officers perceived the government as sufficiently committed to the anti-communist fight and thus saw no need to disobey it. Musco's personal history seems to rule out a strong commitment to the democratic control of the military.[39]

SIFAR increasingly escaped from its principals' control after 1955. The immediate cause was the election by parliament of Giovanni Gronchi as President of the Republic.[40] Gronchi was a leftist Christian Democrat who had opposed Italy's participation in the Atlantic Alliance and was thus mistrusted in Washington, to the point that the CIA reportedly asked and obtained from General Musco compromising information on Gronchi before the 1955 presidential elections.[41] As president, Gronchi confirmed the American government's suspicions, repeatedly acting in the international arena in ways that were in contrast with the prevailing interpretation of his role as President of the Republic, with the foreign policy of the Italian government and with the Atlantic Alliance.[42] SIFAR's principals now had divergent political preferences, giving SIFAR more freedom to choose whom to obey and when.

In late 1955 Gronchi nominated as SIFAR's head General Giovanni De Lorenzo, until then a relatively obscure Army general. De Lorenzo returned Gronchi's favor by telling his subordinates that they depended directly on the President of the Republic.[43] This is a first indication of weak control. Under the Italian Constitution, the president of the Republic is the head of state and the Chief of the Armed Forces, but constitutional scholars agree today, as they did back then, that this does not give the president direction of the Armed Forces or of their intelligence services. SIFAR's chain of command ran instead through the Chief of Defense and the minister of defense, and via the minister of defense to the government and the prime minister. De Lorenzo thus chose to give SIFAR's primary loyalty to someone who did not have the legal authority to control it. In so doing, De Lorenzo was also moving SIFAR towards the left. While still firmly anti-communist, SIFAR was now friendlier towards the left-wing of Christian Democracy, more inclined to take positions which went against the wishes of its American principals and, later on, more favorable towards the opening to the left.

The US government opposed De Lorenzo's greater openness to the left and close relationship with Gronchi, but failed to reverse it. In 1958–1959 internal SIFAR cables stated that the Ministry of Interior was trying "to create a service suitable for replacing the military one" and that the CIA was behind this initiative: it supported it financially, trained its officers and provided it with advanced technical equipment.[44] This reinvigorated intelligence agency was described as

> an instrument of the American intelligence service, to the point that they have covert offices together and, when asked by its American counterparts, this agency operates in pursuit of goals that have nothing to do with the security of the Italian State.[45]

It targeted all parties on the left, from the Communist Party to the leftist wing of Christian Democracy, of which Gronchi was the leading member.[46] In early 1959, the CIA even tried, but failed, to replace De Lorenzo as SIFAR's head. De Lorenzo himself complained to the head of the Italian police that CIA agents in Italy were looking for a candidate to replace him and were sending disparaging information about him to Washington.[47]

These documents indicate that, despite its hierarchical relationship with SIFAR, the US government exercised a weak control over it.[48] SIFAR's other principals, including the Italian government and the President of the Republic, did not fare much better. In the words of a governmental commission established in 1967 to investigate SIFAR's behavior, SIFAR enjoyed "full and unchallenged autonomy in all fields" and control by the minister of defense and Chief of Defense was lacking.[49] SIFAR's files testify to this lack of control. Under De Lorenzo, SIFAR played a more expansive role in Italian politics, going beyond its initial role of anti-communist and generally anti-leftist bastion. SIFAR gathered information on prominent personalities of all political tendencies and all fields, including all members of parliament, industrialists, members of the armed forces, intellectuals, ecclesiastics

and virtually anyone who played a prominent role in the country. Personal files within SIFAR's archives increased exponentially, from a few thousands to 157,000.[50] As these files grew, they focused more and more on negative information that was suitable for compromise but often had nothing to do with national security.[51] This information was frequently distorted to portray the subject in a more negative light.[52] The more SIFAR gathered compromising information, the less its principals could control it, including the one it had explicitly pledged its loyalty to. Even though President Gronchi was probably most responsible for asking SIFAR to conduct extra-institutional activities, it was SIFAR itself that chose to follow Gronchi's orders and, as I will show, not in some of the most important circumstances. In sum, SIFAR was only weakly controlled by its principals in the late 1950s, even before it began to act subversively.

The overthrow of the Tambroni government in 1960

In the summer of 1960 Italy faced a major political crisis. The government led by the Christian Democrat Fernando Tambroni, a protégé of President Gronchi, survived in parliament only thanks to the support of the neo-fascist party. Many viewed this as a violation of the Italian Republic's anti-fascist identity. The Communist and Socialist parties led massive protests against the government, increasing their popularity by rallying around the anti-fascist banner. The security forces were unprepared, and repeatedly used deadly fire against protesters to regain control.[53]

SIFAR's principals were deeply divided. President Gronchi supported the government, whereas other Christian Democratic leaders, such as the party secretary Aldo Moro and former prime minister Amintore Fanfani opposed it, arguing that "he who allies himself with fascism encourages and strengthens communism."[54] The American government shared the concern of those who viewed Tambroni's government as provocative and polarizing, all to the advantage of the communists.[55] As the unrest seemed to be getting out of hand, Tambroni used Gronchi's support to resist the calls from within his own party to resign, raising concerns that he was planning a coup.[56] Ultimately, though, his internal opponents in Christian Democracy's directorate gained the upper hand and forced him to resign.[57]

SIFAR's role in Tambroni's removal only came to light in 1990, when a batch of documents written by Aldo Moro while held captive by the Red Brigades in 1978 was found in a hole in a wall in an apartment that had been used by the Red Brigades years before. After discussing De Lorenzo's role in "the attempted coup of [19]64", Moro added that De Lorenzo

> must also be remembered as the one who actively collaborated, as head of SID [SIFAR],[58] with myself as Party Secretary, to push back into normalcy the red-hot situation which followed the creation of Tambroni's government. This was, in my view, the gravest and most threatening event for the institutions in that period. In fact, De Lorenzo, constantly in touch with me, gave me all the useful intercepts and other informational elements which allowed

> me to request the resignation of the Tambroni government and to promote the creation of the Fanfani government, the first one based on the abstention of the Socialist Party [in the confidence vote in parliament].[59]

This is the only direct primary evidence we have of SIFAR's subversive plot against Tambroni, but it is widely considered credible.[60] Other evidence confirms SIFAR's less than benevolent attitude towards Tambroni. Before the commission investigating SIFAR, De Lorenzo was asked about the security measures that SIFAR had taken in the summer of 1960, "in a climate of conspiracy and coup d'état". De Lorenzo replied that "there was indeed a rebellion-scare under Tambroni's government" and that "once Tambroni fell the scare ceased". "What was particularly worrying" for SIFAR, De Lorenzo added, "was Tambroni's attitude".[61]

SIFAR thus intentionally contributed to the removal of Tambroni's government. We do not have enough information to fully reconstruct the process which led to this successful episode of subversion, but what we have aligns with subversion paradox theory. Both De Lorenzo and Tambroni were strongly anti-communist, but they disagreed on which tactics to employ. De Lorenzo most likely agreed with virtually all of Tambroni's critics within the majority, who viewed Tambroni's government as needlessly polarizing and as strengthening the Communist Party by allowing it to cover itself in the electorally rewarding mantel of anti-fascism.[62] SIFAR thus had a reason to subvert, based on the need to wage a more effective and astute anti-communist campaign.

What enabled SIFAR to subvert was a split among its principals. Tambroni was opposed by several leading figures of Christian Democracy, by the other smaller parties which were usually part of the governing coalition and, less openly, by the US government.[63] This widespread opposition to Tambroni made it relatively easy for SIFAR to engage in subversion. We do not know precisely what information De Lorenzo passed to Moro, but whatever was passed was enough to force Tambroni to resign. De Lorenzo thus collaborated with the secretary of Christian Democracy, despite the fact that the latter could not claim any formal authority over SIFAR. By removing Tambroni, SIFAR acted against the wishes of Tambroni himself and, less obviously, of President Gronchi, the principal which SIFAR itself had chosen as recipient of its primary loyalty to in 1955.[64] In sum, SIFAR was not controlled even by the principal that SIFAR itself had chosen to obey.

From support to subversion: SIFAR, De Lorenzo and the center-left, 1961–1964

By removing Tambroni, SIFAR contributed to the formation of the first center-left government. By late 1963, with the support of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and of the Catholic Church under Pope John XXIII,[65] the Socialists' position had progressed from voting for the government in parliament to joining the government altogether. This first so-called organic center-left government, led by the Christian Democrat Aldo Moro, aroused a strong opposition in the right-wing of the

political spectrum, first and foremost the newly elected President of the Republic, the conservative Christian Democrat Antonio Segni. A looming monetary crisis gave further strength to the center-left's opponents, who argued that the center-left's radical reform program had to be postponed until the crisis was solved.[66]

SIFAR was not initially among the center-left's opponents. In November 1961, for instance, General De Lorenzo ordered one of SIFAR's officers to bribe some of the delegates at the congress of the Italian Republican Party in order to get them to support the pro-center-left faction. In a Frankenstein-like twist, the leader of the anti-center-left faction within the Republican Party was SIFAR's founder, former defense minister Pacciardi, who thus found himself targeted by the political intelligence agency he had created a dozen years prior.[67] SIFAR continued to support the center-left until late 1963,[68] in the belief that it would reduce the Community Party's popularity.

This strategy was dealt a strong blow in the 1963 elections, when the Communists obtained an unprecedented 25% of the votes. In response, SIFAR intensified its anti-communist campaign. In a rare programmatic document sent in September 1963 by Colonel Renzo Rocca, head of SIFAR's Economic and Industrial Research section, to General Giovanni Allavena, head of counterespionage, Rocca argued that the results of the 1963 elections called for a "serious, efficient and global anti-communist activity in Italy".[69] This included propaganda, which "must be continuous, total, heavy, massive, elementary, on the entire national territory and without regards for anyone",[70] as well as

> groups of activists (…) who can use every tool, even the unorthodox ones like intimidation, threat, blackmail, public street fighting, assault, sabotage, terrorism. (…) The fight against communism must be offensive and aggressive. We must not grant them a truce. We must attack [communism] in all of its activities, with all the tools available, licit and illicit.[71]

Organizationally, the imperatives were "security and secrecy: thus one should place at the apex a small group of persons, no more than three or four, who must have the supreme direction of the anti PCI [Partito Comunista Italiano] initiatives."[72] "This Committee," Rocca continued, "decides on the operations to undertake, finances them, controls their results and urges the necessary actions (at the political level, the governmental level and the economic one)."[73]

The teams of anti-communist activists are the only measure included in this document that we can confidently say was implemented, even though the activities of these teams still remain murky.[74] We simply do not know enough to determine the extent to which the other measures were implemented, if at all. Even though we do not know if everyone within SIFAR agreed with Rocca's plan, the intensification of the anti-communist campaign can be attributed to SIFAR as a whole, for two reasons. First, Rocca and Allavena were two of the highest-ranking officers within SIFAR, heading two of SIFAR's three most important organizational compartments. Second, the one section not included in this exchange, Section R, tasked with gathering all the information that did not fall in Rocca's economic purview, similarly intensified its anti-communist activities after the 1963 elections.[75]

This stepped-up anti-communist campaign did not, at least initially, reverse SIFAR's support for the center-left. Most prominently, SIFAR was probably behind the blackmailing of Mario Scelba, a leading right-wing Christian Democrat and former prime minister and minister of the interior.[76] Scelba was among the most skeptical Christian Democrats towards the center-left. He could count on the loyalty of approximately forty members of parliament and in December 1963 he was refusing to vote in favor of the first organic center-left government. A series of articles and photographs alluding to his extramarital affair had been appearing on the press since 1959, but the pressure increased as the first so-called organic center-left government was coming into being, contributing to Scelba's decision to reverse his position and support the center-left.[77]

What led De Lorenzo and SIFAR to start opposing the center-left government was its perceived incapacity to deal with the increasing strength of the Communist Party. The first sign of a shift in SIFAR's and De Lorenzo's position is a US intelligence cable of March 1964. De Lorenzo had by then become Commanding General of the Carabinieri, but he continued to maintain a de facto control over SIFAR, now headed by his trusted aide Egidio Viggiani.[78]

In a conversation with US intelligence officers, De Lorenzo

> expressed to source his concern over what he regards as progressively deteriorating political-economic situation in Italy. He stated that he had been fairly optimistic in January 1964, but he no longer felt that way. He observed that the interplay of political and economic factors, combined with what he described as a completely supine government, was leading the government toward a condition of increasing discrimination, strikes, lockouts, and mass demonstrations. Volunteering at the outset that it was not a matter of coup d'état, De Lorenzo hastened to add that the time had come for responsible leaders of the country to make responsible decisions. The Moro government, he said, could not go on as it had been, because, if it did, the country would go Communist by default (…) Now, he said, is the time to show firmness, while the forces of public order -especially the Carabinieri- are still able to command the situation. (…) The present Moro government, according to de Lorenzo, must give way. (…) [De Lorenzo's] own patience was wearing thin.[79]

The same cable reported that SIFAR's head, General Viggiani, held similar views:

> He [Viggiani] agreed with De Lorenzo that a new government was called for (…). He found Moro timorous and vacillating and charged him with playing into Communist hands in his dealings with Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL) [Italy's largest and Communist-dominated trade union] on labor matters. He observed that Moro had given recently a pitiful performance on television and considered him much too weak for the job. (…)There must be no further sliding by the government toward positions of increased strength for the Communists; (…). He agreed with De Lorenzo that the forces of order are now able to control the situation but that, with further slippage, they might no longer be able to do so.[80]

De Lorenzo and SIFAR were thus motivated to subvert. They perceived Moro's center-left government to be too weak in fighting the communists and they believed that its reform proposals were dragging the country into communism by default.

Divisions amongst SIFAR's principals were once again the permissive condition for subversion. The US government supported the center-left, but many prominent Italian officials, including the President of the Republic Antonio Segni, were against it. Segni had been constitutionally obligated to nominate Moro as prime minister in late 1963, but never stopped looking for a replacement. He was aware that a center-right government would have led to widespread protests, much like under Tambroni in 1960, and he counted on the Carabinieri to prevent such upheavals, viewing them as the only security force where communists had been rooted out almost entirely.[81] De Lorenzo thus developed a plan to suppress widespread popular protests that relied only on the Carabinieri and SIFAR,[82] hence the name "Piano Solo".

Because their position coincided with Segni's, De Lorenzo and SIFAR had the political support they needed to subvert, even though not necessarily to succeed in doing so. An undated and not fully developed note found among De Lorenzo's personal papers shows that he was aware of this need: "With whom and for whom should one do a coup d'état? And President Segni's directives in such a decisive moment? There is no attempt at an authoritarian pronouncement without forces, without political support or objectives."[83]

The Carabinieri and SIFAR began to work on this plan in March 1964. The guidelines distributed to the regional Carabinieri commanders specified that, within the ten biggest urban centers in the country, the Carabinieri had to take defensive action to protect their own installations and offensive action "against the probable adversary (occupation of the RAI-TV, telephone stations, party and newspaper offices, neutralization of prominent politicians etc.)".[84] Accordingly, the final version of the Piano Solo included the occupation of national radio and television stations; the occupation of the offices and newspapers of the Communist and Socialist parties in Italy's biggest cities; and the arrest and deportation to Sardinia of more than seven hundred leftist leaders, from the Communist and Socialist parties and from the communist-dominated Italian General Confederation of Labor.

The goal of the Piano Solo was to crush the widespread protests that a right-wing government, even one lawfully in power and appointed by the President of the Republic, would have surely aroused. In a narrow sense, the Piano Solo was not subversive. It was meant to uphold the existing government, not remove it. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that SIFAR and the Carabinieri were not acting subversively, for at least four reasons.

First, SIFAR and the Carabinieri were planning to act against the Socialist Party, a party that was in the government while the Piano Solo was being drafted.

Second, the Piano Solo violated several constitutional provisions, such as the freedom to form political parties and the procedures regulating the use of emergency powers. The Carabinieri alone would have decided when and if to implement the Piano Solo, in disregard of the constitutional procedures for an

emergency situation requiring a transfer of power to the military.[85] Further, numerous members of parliament were included in the list of extremists that had to be arrested, in violation of parliamentary immunity.[86]

Third, SIFAR was simultaneously giving financial and logistic support to right-wing movements plotting to overthrow the center-left, first and foremost the Movement for a New Republic led by former defense minister Randolfo Pacciardi. After being expelled from the Republican Party for refusing to support the center-left, ironically with SIFAR's support, Pacciardi had formed the Movement for a New Republic, which drew its inspiration from De Gaulle's Fifth Republic in France and advocated a similar solution in Italy. Pacciardi's movement remained small in terms of public opinion, but included several retired high-ranking military officers, including a former Chief of Defense.[87] SIFAR started supporting Pacciardi's movement in the spring of 1964, both financially, providing it with funds and encouraging sympathetic industrialists to do the same, and logistically by organizing rallies and providing transportation for its supporters.

The evidence in this regard is plentiful. On 15 April Colonel Rocca had a conversation with Giorgio Valerio, the head of Edison, Italy's biggest producer of electricity until the nationalization of the electric industry in 1963. According to a note written by Rocca himself, Valerio "expressed his hope for a Brazil-type solution [a military coup had taken place in Brazil just two weeks earlier]. I told him to support Pacciardi, as Pacciardi himself had asked me to say".[88]

At roughly the same time, a former SIFAR officer, Colonel Guglielmo Cerica, heard rumors about De Lorenzo's and SIFAR's support for Pacciardi. He spoke to General Viggiani about them and, in Cerica's own words, Viggiani replied:

> If I did not know your ideological inclination and if I did not know that you have been a volunteer in Spain [fighting for the Fascist regime during the Spanish Civil War], I would tell you these are all a bunch of lies, but keep in mind that things are going really badly here, (…) and that Moro and the socialists are dragging Italy into an economic abyss, hence there are those who desire an emergency government to replace the center-left. (…) You know, De Lorenzo is ready to do some things (…) and if this person [one of Cerica's interlocutors] has told you that Pacciardi's movement must prepare public opinion etc., I do not believe that it is dangerous to support it.[89]

In June, the US government also gathered evidence on the collaboration between the Carabinieri and Pacciardi.[90] On 23 June "a highly reliable informant" of the US Army South European Task Force spoke of a "possible coup d'etat in Italy near future"[91]:

> plan being drafted for national demonstration during next few months by rightist economists and politicians, i.e. liberals, monarchists and members of Italian social movements (Movimento Social[e] Italiano) (MSI). Desired result demonstration is to bring to Rome strong groups war veterans, war-wounded, ex-prisoners of war, etc. under pretext reawakening patriotic feelings Italian

> people create favorable atmosphere for ending current political trend in Italy and installing new order founded on traditional moral and political values of nation. Individual selected coordinate plans for demonstration is Senator Randolfo Pacciardi (…) Appears Pacciardi could count on moral support and collaboration highly placed political rightists, armed forces, national police (Carabinieri) and leaders veterans associations. (…) If demonstration should be opposed by counterdemonstration of extreme leftists, Carabinieri would be immediately called to action [garble] by armed forces. Armed forces would then assume law and order maintenance Italy. Local police cannot be counted on because politically controlled. President Segni aware this plan.

Rumors of a coup were almost certainly an exaggeration. Had it been implemented the Piano Solo would not have led to a military government, even though the military would have exercised a strong influence over the upcoming government. Instead, the Piano Solo would have used unconstitutional means to violently crush the protests against a center-right government that, at least formally, would have been legally in place, appointed by the President of the Republic and confirmed by parliament. However, in early July President Segni and General De Lorenzo realized that they could not legally remove the center-left. They then used the Piano Solo to threaten the government, coercing the Socialist Party into scaling back its demands. This is the last reason why the Piano Solo should be considered subversive, and seeing how the threat was delivered allows us to explain how the events unfolded.

The opportunity to remove Moro's center-left government seemed to arise on 25 June. After the government's defeat in a relatively minor parliamentary vote on public financing for private schools, Moro decided to resign. Immediately, President Segni and General De Lorenzo accelerated the preparations for the creation of a center-right government to replace the center-left and for the implementation of the Piano Solo to crush the protests this would have caused. On the weekend of 27/28 June, SIFAR sent to the local Carabinieri divisions a list of extremists to be arrested. Each division had an emergency meeting, finalizing the details of the plan. At the same time, President Segni asked Christian Democrat Minister of the Interior Paolo Taviani and then Christian Democrat right-winger Mario Scelba to lead a center-right government, mentioning to the former the desirability of having Pacciardi as minister of defense or of the interior. Both refused to do so, fearing widespread protests and unmoved by Segni's assurances that De Lorenzo's Carabinieri would take care of them.[92]

In late June, the international press reported rumors about possible political interventions, even full-fledged coups, by the armed forces and the Carabinieri.[93] This frightened the leading members of the Communist Party, of the communist-led trade union and of the Socialist Party. Many of them started sleeping outside of their own homes, for fear of being imprisoned.[94] The Communist Party "denounce[d] that overtly reactionary groups [were] exploiting the current difficulties to launch an attack against the democratic and republican institutions, thus creating the conditions for the

creation of an authoritarian regime".[95] The leader of the Socialist Party Pietro Nenni told his party's central committee that it was necessary to postpone some of the more ambitious structural reforms to avoid "much greater economic sacrifices" connected to unspecified "authoritarian attempts".[96] For the drafters of the Piano Solo, the spread of these rumors meant that the element of surprise was lost. With presumably some of the targets of the Piano Solo sleeping outside their own homes, implementing the plan became a lot harder.

Segni's and De Lorenzo's plan soon encountered two more obstacles. First, on 1 July the representatives of the governing parties in parliament all publicly indicated that they wanted to continue with Aldo Moro as prime minister. Despite his complaints, Segni was now constitutionally obligated to nominate Moro.[97] The second obstacle emerged on July 2 and 3, when De Lorenzo asked the heads of the Navy and the Air Force for their logistical support in transporting to Sardinia the leftist organizers to be arrested under the Piano Solo..[98] The head of the Navy refused to give his full collaboration, for reasons which have never been fully clarified.

Without the element of surprise, without the support of the Navy and, most importantly, without a center-right government to defend from leftist protests, the Piano Solo had become an unworkable plan. Nonetheless, it could still be used as a threat, probably a bluff, to affect the negotiations between the center-left parties: either the Socialists agreed to curtail their reformist program or they faced the prospect of a right-wing government accompanied by unspecified repressive measures.

President Segni pressured his fellow Christian Democrats not to give ground to the Socialists in the negotiations.[99] He also tried to "put some fear into Moro", continually pressuring him to either close the negotiations quickly or give up his nomination.[100] At the same time, Segni, De Lorenzo and their allies made increasingly explicit and authoritative threats about what would have happened had the negotiations failed.

At a right-wing rally in support of an emergency government on 5 July, former defense minister Pacciardi first delivered the threat:

> the President of the Republic shall point to the country how to steer away from the abyss. Let him order and it will be executed. (…) Who would dare to rebel? The Communists? They will find a worthy opponent! Parliament? The head of State has the power to dissolve it and no one would regret its termination.[101]

Pacciardi's threats were not fully credible, though. He had made similar threats before and he was in no position to enforce them.

The negotiations dragged on inconclusively until 16 July, when Segni and De Lorenzo delivered their threat in full force. First, Segni met De Lorenzo at the presidential palace. Unlike many other previous meetings, the Presidency of the Republic announced De Lorenzo's visit, causing widespread apprehension in the political world.[102] De Lorenzo then attended a secret meeting organized by Segni with Moro and other leaders of Christian Democracy. De Lorenzo was asked

whether he believed that public order could be maintained in case of an emergency government or anticipated elections and replied that it could be done.[103] Both Moro and the Socialist leader Nenni understood Segni's message. If they did not manage to recreate a center-left government accepting the conditions set by the right-wing of Christian Democracy, Segni would have nominated a right-wing emergency government, accompanied by unspecified repressive measures. The next day, the Socialist Party conceded on virtually all the main points. The governing parties reached an agreement to renew the center-left government, but its program was much diminished, in accordance with the demands of its opponents.[104]

Conclusion

Subversion paradox theory offers a good explanation of the behavior of Italian military intelligence between 1943 and 1964. Italian military intelligence always had a strong subversive enemy as one of its priorities. Accordingly, it was not politically neutral, it was poorly controlled by its principals, and it engaged in subversion twice. In 1960, it removed a center-right government it perceived as polarizing and as inadvertently strengthening the Communist Party. In 1964, it engaged in subversion against a center-left government it perceived as too weak to handle the Communist Party's growing strength and whose reformist economic proposals were believed to be dragging the country into an "economic abyss" and into "Communism by default".

Bureaucratic grievances do not offer a valid alternative explanation. There is no evidence that there were strong bureaucratic grievances in either 1960 or 1964, much less that they played a role in SIFAR's subversion. Coup-proofing is also a poor explanation of SIFAR's subversion. The existence of multiple security forces did not play a restraining role in 1960, and only played a minor one in 1964. The Navy's refusal to cooperate made it harder, but probably not impossible, to implement the Piano Solo. Neither the Navy nor other security forces, however, could prevent SIFAR and the Carabinieri from threatening to subvert. Lastly, economic explanations help explain why subversion occurred in 1964, when what seemed like a looming monetary crisis added a sense of urgency to the negotiations among the governing parties, but not why it occurred in 1960, when the country's GDP was growing at an unprecedented rate of 8.3% and many observers were asking themselves why this economic prosperity did not translate into greater political stability.[105]

Notes

1 See, among others, De Lutiis (2010), Pacini (2010), Franzinelli (2008), Wilan (2002) and Ganser (2005). These analyses are frequently unreliable, yet even CIA analysts in a series of papers written in 1983 on right-wing terrorism in Europe spoke of "scattered indications of links between rightist terrorists and members of Italian security services". *Terrorism Review*, 26 May 1983, quote on p. 13, accessed via CREST at NARA.

2 This interpretation, still the most frequent one in the literature, is found amongst others in De Felice (1989), Flamigni (2004), p. 8, De Lutiis (2010), p. xvi and p. 502,

note 36, Faenza (1978), p. 312, Willan (2002), p. 16, Coglitore and Scarso (1992), pp. 15–16, Bisignani and Madron (2013), pp. 187–193 and 204–208, and Mazarinus (2014).

3 See Mieli (2004a and 2004b), Teodori and Bordin (2014), pp. 122–131, and Sabbatucci (1999), pp. 204–206.

4 See article 22 of the Armistice, reproduced by the Avalon Project at Yale University.

5 All the vote shares are taken from the official results published by the Ministry of the Interior and refer to the Chamber of Deputies.

6 Nuti (1999), p. 30.

7 The literature is unanimous on Allied control of Italy's military intelligence and this corresponds to the letter of the armistice. See Pasqualini (2007), p. 265 and (2011), p. 17, De Lutiis (2010), pp. 22–23, Naftali (1992), p. 224, Viviani (1986), p. 275, and Holzman (2008), p. 57.

8 See articles 10 and 35 of the Long Armistice and KV4/153, BNA, "Arrangements for security service officers to scrutinize documents from the Italian archives in Rome".

9 There is widespread consensus on this point. See, amongst others, Del Pero (2001), p. 1328, note 56, and De Lutiis, p. 34.

10 There is a consensus in the literature on the priorities of Italian intelligence. See, for instance, Viviani (1986), p. 280, Pasqualini (2007), pp. 246–248 and Colonna Villasi (2013), p. 70.

11 See the documents in WO204/12385, "Reorganization of the 808th CS (Italian Counter-espionage) Battalion", British National Archives (BNA).

12 Memorandum by Major General Browning to the Land Forces Sub-Commission of the Allied Military Government, 1 June 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

13 Memorandum by Major General Browning to the Land Forces Sub-Commission of the Allied Military Government, 2 July 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

14 Memorandum by Lt. Colonel Heard, Allied Force Headquarters, for the Deputy Chief of Staff of G-2, 4 August 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

15 Angleton's report for the month of October 1945, box 260, entry 108A, RG226, National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth NARA), cited in Naftali (1992), pp. 225–230.

16 Memorandum by Major General Airey, G-2 (US Army Intelligence) to the Allied Forces Head Quarters on 12 July 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

17 Memorandum by Brigadier General Smith, Allied Force Headquarters, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, 23 September 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

18 Undated memo by Colonel Nichols for the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2. The memo was most likely written in August-September 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

19 Memorandum by Brigadier General Smith on 7 August 1945, WO204/12385, BNA.

20 Memorandum by Brigadier General Smith on 12 June 1946, WO204/12385, BNA.

21 Memorandum from an unnamed officer of XIII corps to the Assistant Chief of Staff of G-2, 12 January 1946, WO204/12385, BNA.

22 This report has no author, no addressee and no date, other than a hand written one of 12 February 1946. It was most likely written within G-2 at the Allied Headquarters. WO204/12385, BNA.

23 Pacini (2010), pp. 35–38, Pasqualini (2011), pp. 26–27 and De Lutiis (2010), pp. 48–50. Pacini cites a document of 23 January 1950 by the military intelligence service which mentions that the "political program (of the most important sections of UAARR) is of an anticommunist character" and that "the majority of the functionaries and officers come from the ranks of OVRA". The document is in the acts of the judiciary proceedings 91/97, tribunal of Brescia.

24 The most recent and complete historical account of the UAARR is Pacini (2010).

25 Flamigni (2004), p. 8, De Lutiis (2010), p. xvi and p. 502, note 36, Faenza (1978), p. 312, Willan (2002), p. 16, Coglitore and Scarso (1992), pp. 15–16 and Del Pero (2001), p. 1309.

26 De Lutiis (2010), p. 43, Viviani (1986) p.3 28, Cipriani and Cipriani (1991), pp. 30–31, Del Pero (2001), p. 1309, Colonna Villasi (2013), p. 76, Vento (2010), pp. 285–287 and Flamigni (2005), p. 5.
27 An office staffed by NATO (and mainly American) personnel decided who would receive a security clearance, thus subjecting Italian intelligence agents to NATO vetting. See General Giovanni De Lorenzo's testimony in front of Parliament, reproduced in Flamigni (2005), pp. 84, 227–228.
28 Naftali (1992), p. 227, based on Angleton's reports in Entry 108A, RG226, NARA. Angleton numbered his contacts in Italy's naval intelligence with the same cryptonym (e.g. JK/1) and Naftali found that the numbers associated with the same cryptonym go up to fourteen, although reports from only ten of these contacts are available at NARA.
29 Naftali (1992), p. 236, note 11. He takes this information from Boxes 199–274, Entry 108A, RG226, NARA.
30 Cited in Weiner (2007), p. 27.
31 Working Paper, Branch Weekly, Western Europe Branch, Office of Reports and Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency, 21 June 1949, accessed via CREST at NARA. www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-01090A000400010002-5.pdf
32 See, among others, NSC1 of 15 October 1947 and NSC1/2 of 10 February 1948. The latter reads: "The (Italian) government is under strong and persistent Communist attack aimed ultimately at the creation of a Communist dictatorship subservient to Moscow. The political position of the Communist party is stronger in Italy than in any other country outside the Soviet orbit." See also NSC67, of April 1950, and NSC5411 of April 1954. All documents are from the NSC files at NARA.
33 These plans are briefly discussed in Franzinelli (2010), p. 14. The original document by the Ministry of Defense is circular 450/R, 1 November 1950, entitled "Norme e disposizioni per l'assunzione dei poteri da parte dell'autoritá militare nel caso di gravi ed estesi sovvertimenti dell'ordine pubblico".
34 A discussion of the anti-leftist measures taken by the Ministry of Defense can be found in an unsigned document, filed on 18 September 1950, now in the files of the Ministry of Interior, Divisione Affari Riservati, LS13/254, Envelope 7, "Attivitá Comunista nelle Forze Armate", Archivio Centrale dello Stato. See also Franzinelli (2010), p. 14.
35 See Viviani (1986), pp. 328–330, and De Lutiis (2010), p. 39, who cite from one of SIFAR's founding directives on 1 September 1949.
36 Viviani (1986), pp. 329–330.
37 Testimony by Colonel Renzo Rocca in front of the Beolchini Commission, reproduced in Flamigni (2004), p. 133. See also Musco's statements in ibidem, pp. 108–110, and De Lutiis (2010), p. 40.
38 Reproduced in Flamigni (2004), p. 33. Flamigni's edited volume reproduces in full the report and the transcripts of the Beolchini Commission of 1967. Most of the documents upon which the Commission's report is based have been destroyed in order to eliminate their blackmail potential. Others are presumably still classified. I thus have to rely on the Commission's own findings, even though, as I will show, some of them have to be taken with a grain of salt.
39 In the late 1940s, Ettore Musco's brother, Colonel Ugo Musco, was the head of a secret association of military officers, the Armata Italiana di Liberazione, which plotted to overthrow the newborn Italian Republic and re-establish the monarchy. It is likely that Ettore Musco knew what his brother was doing, but there is no evidence to show this. On the Armata Italiana di Liberazione, see the documents of the Ministry of the Interior cited by Giannuli (2013), pp. 29–33; the State Department documents in RG59 Decimal File 1945–1949, Box 6913, document 865.00/12–1146 and Box 6914B, document 865.00/11–1747; and the Central Intelligence Group's Intelligence Report on the Esercito Clandestino Anticomunista, 10 September 1947, accessed via CREST at NARA. www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R000900160007-2.pdf

40 To this day, the President of the Republic is elected by parliament with a qualified majority. His role as head of state is mainly ceremonial, the main exception being the power to appoint the prime minister in accordance with the parliamentary majority. If a majority in parliament cannot express a clear preference in favor of a government and a prime minister, the President of the Republic's power of appointment becomes politically significant.
41 At least based on a journalistic account by in Tedeschi (1968), p. 53. Tedeschi's account reports no source but it was never refuted. A senior intelligence officer, Colonel Renzo Rocca, also testified to the Beolchini Commission on 21 January 1967 of contrasts between General Musco and Gronchi; reproduced in Flamigni (2004), p. 132.
42 On Gronchi's foreign policy initiatives, see Ilari (1994), pp. 59–60, Mammarella and Cacace (2006), pp. 203–208, and Romano (2006), pp. 100–114.
43 See the testimony by Colonel Alfonso Pontillo in front of the Beolchini Commission, reproduced in Flamigni (2004), pp. 216–218.
44 "Annotazione sulle attivitá di guerra psicologica e non ortodossa (psychological and low density warfare) compiute in Italia tra il 1969 e il 1974 attraverso l'AGINTER PRESSE". The file includes many summaries of cables by SIFAR's counterespionage centers, written by the Carabinieri for a trial in 1996. The quote is from the summary of a SIFAR cable dated 7 September 1958, p. 55. Evidence of American support for the newly reinvigorated intelligence agency is from the cables dated 11 September 1958, 16 December 1958, 23 January 1959, 13 May 1959, 22 May 1959, 1 October 1959, 7 October 1959 and 10 October 1959, pp. 56–60.
45 Ibidem, p. 58, cable dated 10 October 1959.
46 Ibidem, pp. 56–58, cables dated 11 September 1958 and 10 October 1959.
47 Ibidem, p. 60, note of 8 February 1959. See also Pacini (2010), pp. 57–60.
48 For a fuller account of the US government's weak control over SIFAR, with detailed references to the subversive plot in 1964, see my own account in Faini (2016).
49 Reproduced in Flamigni (2004), pp. 46–49.
50 Reproduced in Flamigni (2004), p. 19.
51 Ibidem, p. 19.
52 Ibidem, p. 23.
53 See, among others, Radi (1990), pp. 94–97.
54 Fanfani's diary, entry for 2 July 1960, quoted in Franzinelli (2010), p. 19.
55 For instance, a CIA briefing to the National Security Council on 13 April 1960 argued that "unless a solidly-based center-left government can be found, the prospects are for a long period of political instability" (www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R00890A001200040012-7.pdf) and one on 14 July 1960 stated that "both Communists and neo-fascists stand to gain from continuance of Tambroni government." (www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R00890A001200070008-9.pdf) Accessed via CREST at NARA. See also Colby (1978), p. 137, and Nuti (1999), pp. 292–293.
56 For instance, the CIA Weekly Intelligence Report on 23 June 1960 spoke of a "coup atmosphere", argued that "the current situation presents several elements propitious for a quick and violent seizure of power" and that "Tambroni's personality would lend itself to (an extralegal political adventure)". Accessed via CREST at NARA.
57 Radi (1990), pp. 94–129 and Franzinelli (2010), pp. 17–19.
58 SID, Servizio Informazioni Difesa, was the name of SIFAR's successor from 1965 to 1977. Moro evidently confused the acronyms here.
59 Reproduced in Biscione (1993), pp. 46–47.
60 From the moment in which Moro's first writings from "prison" emerged, there has been a debate as to whether they sincerely expressed Moro's beliefs. I am unaware of anyone having questioned the truthfulness of the passage I use here and there is an emerging consensus among scholars in considering what Moro wrote to be a genuine expression of his beliefs. See Biscione (1993), p. 22, Flamigni (1997), p. 11, Gotor in Moro (2008), pp. xviii–xix, Sabbatucci (1999), pp. 204–205, note 1, Franzinelli (2010), p. 17, and Ilari (1993), pp. 140–142.

61 Testimony by De Lorenzo in front of the Beolchini commission, reproduced in Flamigni (2004), p. 325.
62 De Lorenzo's biographer agrees with this interpretation. See Ilari (1993), pp. 141–142.
63 Nuti (1999), p. 296.
64 Gronchi's support for Tambroni never wavered during the crisis, as observers at the time recognized. For instance, the dispatches by the British Embassy in Rome on 14, 16 and 29 July 1960, spoke of "the President of the Republic's predilection and whole-hearted support for Signor Tambroni". In FO371/153300 and FO371/153301, BNA. See also Radi (1990), pp. 112–115, 123–129.
65 The US government's position vis-à-vis the center-left is recounted in detail in Nuti (1999), especially pp. 444–451 and pp. 471–475. On the Catholic Church's position, see, among others, Franzinelli (2010), p. 33.
66 See especially Cavalieri (2010).
67 SIFAR officers later freely discussed the operation. See the testimony by Lt. Colonel Agostino Buono in front of the Beolchini Commission, reproduced in Flamigni (2004), pp. 195–196, and De Lorenzo's testimony, quoted in Ilari, p. 144. See also Gatti (1990), p. 64, De Lutiis (2010), pp. 174, Franzinelli (2010), pp. 32, 233, note 39, and the memoirs of a journalist whom SIFAR recruited for this operation, Dell'Amico (2013), pp. 113–150.
68 A now discredited historiography claimed that SIFAR plotted against the center-left in 1962. Faenza (1978), p. 315 synthesized a supposed joint CIA-SIFAR plan against the center-left of June 1962. He provided no reference for this plan and no one has ever found it since. His account has nonetheless enjoyed a remarkable popularity among leftist historians. See, among others, the introduction in Flamigni (2005), p. 12, Ganser (2005), p. 70, Willan (2002), pp. 37–38, and De Lutiis (2010), pp. 68–69. Other scholars dismiss his account as wholly unreliable. See Gatti (1990), pp. 63–66, Ilari (1993), p. 223, Nuti (1999), pp. xi, 379, 619–620, and Mistry, personal communication.
69 The document, entitled "Aspetti dell'azione anticomunista in Italia e suggerimenti per attuare una politica anticomunista" (Aspects of the anti-communist action in Italy and suggestions in order to enact an anti-communist policy), came to light during the last trial for the massacre in Piazza della Loggia, Brescia, in 1974, in file n.1962-2-21-32. What is available is the introductory letter and the first of ten documents, written on 12 September 1963 by Rocca himself, who described them as "the final summary of everything". Allavena was more than a passive recipient, as Rocca asked him to send him a copy of what Allavena himself was writing on the same topic.
70 Ibidem, p. 6.
71 Ibidem, p. 8.
72 Ibidem, pp. 10–11.
73 Ibidem, p. 12.
74 See the reports of the Parliamentary Commission on the Events of June-July 1964. For the majority report, see Alessi (1971), pp. 537–562. For the minority report by the leftist parliamentarians, see the reproduction in Flamigni (2005), pp. 169–173.
75 Two notes by Section R on 30 October and 16 November 1963 detailed the change in purpose of Operation Gladio. In the early days of the Cold War, Gladio had been "exclusively a Stay-Behind operation" meant to launch a guerrilla warfare campaign in the rear of an invading Communist army, but now there had been an "intensification of the training and operational activity" related to the fact that Gladio units had the additional task of "controlling and neutralizing subversive or seditious (*eversive o sovversive*) activities". It is likely that these changes were related to the 1963 elections. On Gladio see especially Flamigni (2012) and the report by De Lutiis quoted therein, p. 273.
76 No primary sources demonstrate SIFAR's role in Scelba's blackmail, but all the secondary sources that mention this episode agree that this was the case. See Pizzinelli (1982), pp. 187–198, Galli (1991), pp. 87–91, Franzinelli (2010), p. 61.

77 Galli (1991), p. 89–91, and Pizzinelli (1982), p. 198. More important than SIFAR's blackmail was the pressure by the Vatican, which spoke of the "necessary unity" within the Christian Democracy.

78 The commissions that investigated SIFAR's behavior agreed on this point. See the report by the Lombardi Commission, p. 53, the Beolchini Commission (in Flamigni (2004), pp. 37–44 and p. 134), and the two parliamentary reports: Alessi (1971), pp. 444–449 and pp. 1118–1123, and the minority report reproduced in Flamigni (2005), pp. 86–88.

79 See Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XII, Western Europe, Document 95, 13 March 1964, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d95.

80 Ibidem. The cable quotes Colonel Rocca and another senior SIFAR officer expressing similar views.

81 On Segni's longstanding faith in the Carabinieri alone, see the statement by General Lombardi in the acts of the Lombardi Commission, vol. 4, p. 284 and the letter from then foreign minister Segni to Defense Minister Giulio Andreotti on 23 August 1961, reproduced in Franzinelli (2010), p. 278.

82 This is the main argument in Franzinelli (2010), see especially pp. 4 and 82–86. The Lombardi Commission report had reached the same conclusion (see p. 10). There is little evidence of explicit demands from Segni, perhaps because such demands were unlikely to leave a paper trail.

83 Quoted by Franzinelli (2010), p. 227, who first found it in De Lorenzo's personal archive.

84 Note by Colonel Tuccari, head of the Operations Office at the Carabinieri headquarters. The note, distributed on 27 April 1964, is reproduced in Franzinelli (2010), pp. 297–298. The various drafts of the Piano Solo are now in the acts of the Parliamentary Commission on Massacres, Vol. I, pp. 15–126, www.senato.it/documenti/repository/relazioni/archiviostorico/commissioni/X%20LEG_TERRORISMO_DOC_RELAZ/X_%20LEG_TERRORISMO_DOC%20XXIII_25%20VOL.1_11.1.91.pdf.

85 One draft of the plan stated that it had to be implemented "before the transfer of power from civilian to military authorities. It follows that the order to implement this plan is independent from the norms included in the emergency projects and in the local plans for public order by the prefectures." Quoted in the minority report of the Parliamentary Commission, reproduced in Flamigni (2005), pp. 103–104. Several testimonies confirmed this. See among others the testimony of General Zinza to the Lombardi Commission, now in the acts of the Commission on Massacres, Vol. IV, p. 638.

86 Who exactly was on this list has still not fully been resolved. When the government asked SIFAR's successor to release the list in 1990, the military intelligence service replied that it had been lost (see Franzinelli (2010), p. 89). The Lombardi Commission (see report p. 31) was supposedly allowed to view the list and concluded, like most of the officers who testified later, that no sitting parliamentarians or prominent personalities were included. This conclusion has long been called into doubt. Virtually all the officers both in SIFAR and in the Carabinieri said that they had given only a quick look at the list and didn't remember any noticeable names. The few names that they did mention, however, included members of parliament and even a former candidate for President of the Republic (see the minority report in Flamigni (2005), pp. 157–159). Franzinelli (2010), pp. 89–90 and 287–297, reconstructed about half the list. He found that it included more than two-dozen members of parliament. Apart for three Socialists, all of them were from the Communist Party.

87 See the testimony by Colonel Cerica in front of the Lombardi Commission, pp. 296–297.

88 The note was first published in the Italian weekly Panorama on 18 July 1974 in an article by Luigi Bisignani and Stefano De Andreis, who claimed to have photocopied the documents directly from Rocca's file. The authenticity of these documents is undisputed. See Franzinelli (2010), p. 91, and Flamini (1981), p. 43.

89 Testimony by Colonel Cerica to the Lombardi Commission, pp. 266–269. On another occasion Viggiani repeated to Cerica that "De Lorenzo was ready to do some things", see p. 271. Cerica also discussed SIFAR's logistical support for Pacciardi, pp. 267–269. Cerica's testimony is particularly credible because given in front of fellow Carabinieri officers after the guarantee that it was going to remain secret. It was then declassified in 1990, like many other documents on the Piano Solo, with a decision that remains unique to this day.

90 In a conversation with US officials in May, De Lorenzo had expressed skepticism about Pacciardi and said he was "not critical of the Moro government". I have argued elsewhere (see Faini (2016)) that De Lorenzo was most likely not sincere in his remarks and was instead trying to deceive his American interlocutors, which he did rather successfully. See Airgram from the Embassy of Italy to the Department of State, Rome, 26 May 1964, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968 Volume XII, Western Europe, Document 96. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d96

91 Telegram From the Commanding General, U.S. Army South European Task Force to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Army in Europe, Verona, Italy, 26 June 1964. Reproduced in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. XII, Western Europe, Document 100. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d100

92 Franzinelli (2010), p. 119. In a note to Segni on 30 June, SIFAR argued that the best solution to the crisis would have been a minority government by Christian Democracy only, presumably supported in parliament by right-wing parties. The note is reproduced in Franzinelli (2010), pp. 320–322.

93 Alessi (1971), pp. 381–382 and Franzinelli (2010), p. 102.

94 See Franzinelli (2010), pp. 117–118 and the personal recollection by Flamigni, Dossier "Piano Solo", p. 17.

95 The communique was published on the Communist Party's newspaper *L'Unitá* on 30 June. It is quoted in Franzinelli (2010), p. 117, and in the papers of the Fondazione Nenni, envelope 126, file 2471.

96 Speech by Nenni to the Central Committee of the Socialist Party, 4 July 1964, now in Archivio Fondazione Nenni, envelope 97, file 2258, p. 26 of the typewritten speech.

97 See Franzinelli (2010), pp. 119–123, and Ilari (1993), p. 197.

98 See Ilari (1994), p. 219, Franzinelli (2010), p. 116, and the testimony by De Lorenzo in front of the Parliamentary Commission, reproduced in Alessi (1971), pp. 991–996.

99 Segni's diary shows repeated instances in which he put pressure on Christian Democratic leaders to take a hard stance in the negotiations. See his diary entries for 11, 12–13 and 16 July in Segni (2012), pp. 261–262.

100 From Segni's diary (2012), pp. 261–262, entry for 12 July 1964. Segni succeeded in making Moro feel, in the words of a close aide, "worried and unusually anxious", but failed to induce him to renounce the nomination. See Franzinelli (2010), p. 126, who cites from the memoirs of Giovanni Galloni, a member of Christian Democracy's directorate.

101 Quoted in Franzinelli (2010), p. 127.

102 See Alessi (1971), p. 403.

103 The testimonies of the participants to this meeting are in Alessi (1971), pp. 418–426.

104 The literature is unanimous on this point. See especially Franzinelli (2010), p. 141, who cites a note by Nenni, now in the Archivio Fondazione Nenni, linking the pressure by Segni on 16 July and the agreement reached in the night of 17/18 July.

105 See, for instance, the American Embassy's report on "Economic Progress and Political Alignment", 11 August 1960, in NARA, RG59, Entry Country Decimal File 60–63, Box 2682, 865.00/8–1160.

7

CONCLUSION

Evaluating the argument

Overall, subversion paradox theory has performed well. In all case studies, the inclusion of a perceived strong subversive movement among an intelligence agency's priorities caused a shift from non-political to political intelligence agencies. Policymakers' control over these political intelligence agencies was fragile. In the cases of the FBI and SIFAR, I found no evidence of weak control for the first few years in which the preferences of policymakers and of the agencies converged, but plenty of evidence afterwards. In the British case, control was weak from the start.

SIFAR and the FBI also routinely used the information they gathered in the domestic political struggle, often as a source of blackmail vis-à-vis other political figures, including their principals. Their assessments were generally tainted and rarely objective, even though SIFAR was more blatant in this regard. The evidence is weaker in the case of British intelligence, yet we saw that DIHO's estimates on communist strength were often considered unreliable and that SIS officers lied to policymakers to make the case for the Zinoviev letter's authenticity.

Most importantly, all of these political agencies engaged in subversion. They subverted when they perceived that the government was unwilling or incapable of adequately fighting the subversive threat and when they had the opportunity to install an alternative, more forceful government. MI5 and SIS in 1924 and the FBI in 1948 used an upcoming close election to try to subvert the government, successfully in the former case and unsuccessfully in the latter. DIHO and several branches of British military intelligence in 1920 and SIFAR in 1960 and 1964 sought to exploit divisions among their principals to install an alternative government. In 1920 in Britain and in 1964 in Italy, these divisions turned out to be insufficient for subversion to succeed, but the threat to subvert was delivered nonetheless. In Italy in 1960 subversion worked smoothly: a new government came to power and SIFAR's role remained secret for three decades.

Because virtually all the literature focuses on non-political intelligence agencies, they received less attention in this book, with only one short chapter dedicated to the CIA and two sections on British intelligence and on the Bureau of Investigation before 1917. Still, these cases have shown that these agencies were politically neutral, respected the divide between foreign and domestic intelligence and were strongly controlled by their principals. They never engaged in subversion and there was no evidence that they routinely manipulated intelligence. On the contrary, the CIA strove to preserve its objectivity and impartiality, at times against considerable pressure from policymakers.

Subversion paradox theory closely matched the empirical record, better than alternative explanations, but several points need further analysis, pointing the way forward for future researchers. First, subversion paradox theory is not a full explanation of when an intelligence agency will be political or non-political. I identify the presence of a strong subversive movement among an agency's priority as a sufficient but not necessary condition for an agency to be political. Thus, an agency can be political even though it does not have a subversive priority. This seems to happen rarely, and in none of my cases, but we still do not know when and why. Future scholars should investigate these cases and explain what led these agencies to be political in the absence of a counter-subversive priority.

Second, my cases cover a number of transitions from a non-political to a political intelligence agency, but only one partial transition from political to non-political. The Bureau of Investigation from 1924 to 1936 moved in the direction of a non-political intelligence agency after Attorney General Stone banned it from fighting subversion. However, Hoover's Bureau never fully abandoned the anti-subversive fight, but merely scaled it back to the point where it was not detectable by its principals. This caused a marked reduction in the Bureau's political activities, but not their cessation. One partial case study is not enough to confidently explain what happens when a strong subversive movement stops being a priority. Will a political intelligence agency transform itself into a non-political one or will it stick to its political habits, which have likely gone beyond the mere anti-subversive fight? Possible case studies of transition from political to non-political are British intelligence in the Cold War and numerous continental European intelligence agencies after the Cold War, when leftist subversion stopped being a plausible concern, or should have stopped. Most of these cases are too recent to conduct a well-documented case study, hence we will have to wait until more documents are declassified. Future scholars will have to keep in mind that it is the perception of the strength of the subversive movement that matters. Even though a modern-day observer will likely conclude that subversive movements did not pose a plausible threat, intelligence officials at the time may have thought otherwise, and behaved accordingly.

Third, the three countries I studied give us an initial degree of confidence in the theory's validity, but more cases are needed before assessing this validity conclusively. I studied the US and UK to show that the prevailing assumptions in the literature do not even fully explain the cases they are best suited to explain, and Italy to show how misleading they can be. Other cases, such as French intelligence,

seem to be well explained by subversion paradox theory,[1] but more cases, especially of emerging democracies outside the West, would be an especially probing test of the theory's range and give us more confidence in its causal mechanisms.

Fourth, even though the scope of theory is limited to democratic countries, there are a number of interesting similarities between political intelligence agencies and intelligence agencies in authoritarian countries. The most important one is that both are designed to preserve the current political distribution of power, or at least to prevent the opposition from gaining power. A very similar causal argument plausibly follows. An authoritarian intelligence agency is not politically neutral and, if its internal enemy is transnational in character, the dividing lines between domestic and foreign intelligence will be blurred. As scholars of intelligence in authoritarian countries have long recognized, authoritarian intelligence agencies routinely produce highly politicized products, which pander to the worldview of their leaders.[2] They have also repeatedly attempted to subvert their own government,[3] but we do not know the circumstances under which they are more or less likely to do so. Of course, authoritarian countries differ widely one from the other, and these differences are likely to reflect themselves on their intelligence agencies. Future scholars should study intelligence agencies in authoritarian countries, comparing them amongst themselves and with political intelligence agencies. Transitional democracies are likely to be particularly interesting cases, and scholars have already begun to study how and to what extent intelligence agencies change as countries democratize.[4]

What policymakers can and should do

Subversion paradox theory argues that one type of agency, the non-political one, is better than the other. However, building a CIA-like agency is not always a viable or desired option, for two reasons. First, no matter how improper it may seem, policymakers may want to have at their disposal a political agency to use in the domestic struggle, regardless of whether a strong subversive movement exists. They may not care much that they are unlikely to control it for more than a few years, especially if their prospects for survival in power are low and their time horizon is short. My theory faces a normatively more challenging argument if a strong subversive movement exists, or is believed to exist. Policymakers should fight against it in order to preserve the constitutional order. An intelligence agency will help them do so, but this agency will inevitably be political. Policymakers may consider this to be a lesser evil than letting a strong subversive movement go unchecked, but this book shows that there are several drawbacks they should be aware of: their control over intelligence will be reduced, the assessments they will receive will likely be biased and the targets of the intelligence agency will likely go beyond the strong subversive movement and may even include policymakers themselves. In other words, the intelligence agency itself will become a threat to the constitutional order it was meant to protect.

Senior policymakers rarely have much time to think about how to build a healthy relationship with their intelligence agencies and how best to control them. In the little time that they have, they are likely to come up with an opposite solution to the one I recommend: maintaining control and eliciting responsiveness by making sure that their intelligence agencies share their political preferences. If they think like I do, a policymaker may think, why would they disobey me?

As we have seen, this tool of control repeatedly proved fragile and short-lived. Preferences diverged within a few years and policymakers were left dealing with an agency that had no reluctance to intervene in politics and no longer shared their political agenda. At times the same policymaker who had profited from the political services of a political intelligence agency was later damaged by it. Italian defense minister Randolfo Pacciardi established SIFAR in 1949 and used it to purge leftist sympathizers from the military, but twelve years later SIFAR conducted an operation against him that led to his expulsion from his party. In 1960 Christian Democratic leader Aldo Moro used SIFAR to remove a government he disliked, but in 1964 it was his turn to be the target of SIFAR's subversive plots. Franklin Roosevelt repeatedly recurred to the FBI for compromising information on his political opponents, but similar information was collected on his closest aides as well, including his wife.

A better solution, I argue, is to create a politically neutral intelligence agency. Such an agency will likely resist attempts to politicize it and to use it for partisan purposes, but will generally stand ready to obey all legitimate orders, including the ones it disagrees with. Policymakers will not have at their disposal a ready-to-use tool of domestic political intrigue, but will instead have an agency that is less likely to engage in unauthorized activities. From this perspective, the CIA is a model to look up to. Policymakers should not be misled by the baseless but enduring legend of the CIA as an out-of-control rogue elephant. Instead, as we have seen, even the CIA's fiercest critics ultimately recognized that the CIA was utterly responsive to policymakers' orders and firmly under their control – at times too responsive given the illegitimacy of some of those orders. There is no tradeoff between control and responsiveness on one side and political neutrality on the other. Instead, they go together. The more politically neutral an agency is, the more it will be responsive and under policymakers' control.

Policymakers will do well to keep in mind the importance of the political neutrality of their intelligence agencies, but do they really have the power to shape intelligence in one direction or another? If intelligence priorities determine the type of agency and the type of agency determines the degree of control, what is left for policymakers to do to improve their relationship with their intelligence agencies? In fact, quite a lot.

First of all, policymakers choose the initial priorities of their intelligence agencies and exercise a strong influence over them afterwards. If policymakers do not think that they face a strong subversive movement, they should make sure that the priorities of their intelligence agencies reflect that. If an agency is seen as too attached to its political habits, policymakers should consider abolishing it and creating a new one.

Attorney General Stone's partial success in modifying the Bureau of Investigation's priorities shows that policymakers are not always able to change these priorities as they see fit. Nonetheless, their influence will be considerable. It took a presidential request to reverse Stone's ban on investigations unrelated to law enforcement, after over a decade in which the Bureau's counter-subversive effort was considerably reduced, and with it its tendency to meddle in politics. Stone's attempt to draw the Bureau away from subversion failed because he nominated Edgar Hoover as the Bureau's head. Stone based his decision on Hoover's stated belief in political neutrality rather than on his past behavior, reminding us that preferences and beliefs are subject to change and misrepresentation and are thus a poor source of control.

Second, in order to minimize the pernicious effects of the anti-subversive fight on intelligence–policy relations, policymakers can assign different priorities to different agencies. Policymakers facing strong subversive enemies should identify only one agency to fight against these enemies and only these enemies. A first positive consequence would be that the other intelligence agencies could be non-political. A second positive consequence would be to limit the reach of the only political intelligence agency to counter-subversion alone, excluding other tasks such as counterintelligence or law enforcement.

It seems that most political leaders adopt a different, and ill-advised, solution. According to the logic of coup-proofing, policymakers that fear being subverted by their intelligence agencies should create multiple intelligence agencies with overlapping turfs, so that they will compete and guard one another. As we have seen, having multiple intelligence agencies has rarely been effective in preventing subversion by the agencies themselves.[5] Furthermore, if multiple intelligence agencies are tasked with the fight against a strong subversive movement, policymakers will ensure that they will all be political and weakly controlled. The model to follow in this regard is again the US, where the CIA was not tasked with the fight against domestic subversion. Even though the FBI's competences went far beyond subversion, Truman's decision to exclude it from the foreign intelligence field was sound, allowing US presidents to have a foreign intelligence agency that was under their control and that did not routinely manipulate its estimates.

Lastly, we should not forget that political and non-political intelligence agencies are two opposite ideal types, and all real cases will fall somewhere in between. Via their selection of personnel and the kind of services they request from them, policymakers push intelligence agencies in one direction or another. The more they move towards the ideal type of the political intelligence agency, the less they will be able to control it, and vice versa.

Policymakers thus have a number of ways to mitigate the problem of controlling intelligence, even when they face a strong subversive enemy. Far from being an impossible task, controlling intelligence is feasible, as long as policymakers have the patience to develop solutions which at times may seem counterintuitive, but which we have seen to be more effective than apparently easier and more intuitive ones.

Notes

1 The arguments in Porch (2007), for instance, are remarkably similar to what one would expect based on subversion paradox theory.
2 Andrew (2004), p. 177 and p. 179. Andrew describes the basic functions of intelligence communities in authoritarian regimes as, first, repression and social control and, second, to act as a mechanism for reinforcing the regime's misconceptions of the outside world. See also, among others, Pollack (2002), pp. 561–563, who applies this argument to Arab autocracies, Bar Joseph (2013), p. 348, Garthoff (2015), pp. 12, 85, and the chapter by Maddrell in Maddrell et al. (2018), pp. 21–22, 36–37.
3 See the Polity IV dataset and the dataset by Powell and Thyne (2011).
4 See, among others, Bruneau (2001), Williams and Deletant (2001), Matei and Bruneau (2011a) and (2011b).
5 The most recent literature on coup proofing similarly finds little evidence that coup proofing is an effective solution. See Powell (2012) and Bohmelt and Pilster (2015).

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